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LILLINGTON OAK TREE—THE CENTRE OF ENGLAND

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SKETCHES OF

Leafy Warwickshire

RURAL AND URBAN

BY

GEORGE MORLEY

*Author of "Rambles in Shakespeare's Land," &c.*

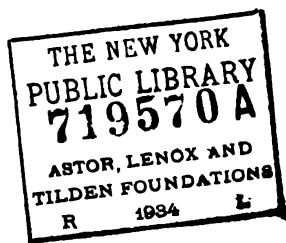
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## PREFACE

**I**N writing these "Sketches of Leafy Warwickshire," I have striven, as far as possible, to treat of subjects but little known to the general reader and outside the scope of the ordinary guide-book. I had also in view the comparative dearth of Warwickshire books imparting information in a light, interesting, and chatty form. I therefore venture to hope that in the pages of this book will be found enough agreeable matter to inspire a still wider and more permanent interest than already exists in this classic and historic shire—made for ever famous by the genius of Shakespeare, Drayton, Landor, and George Eliot.

GEORGE MORLEY

*Leamington, 1895*

*Collected by Mary 1932*



THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED  
WITH EVERY FEELING OF LIVELY REGARD  
TO  
MY DEAR FRIEND  
THE REV. PERCY COATES, M.A. (OXON)  
RECTOR OF BENTHAM, LANCASTER  
FORMERLY OF ST. PAUL'S, LEAMINGTON ; AND  
KEGWORTH, DERBYSHIRE

GEORGE MORLEY

*Leamington, 1895*



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# In a Country Churchyard :

A RURAL SKETCH.

A





## In a Country Churchyard:

A RURAL SKETCH.

ONE day I walked about a Warwickshire "God's Acre." It was something like the old London burial grounds; something like the one where the "poor Jo" of Charles Dickens returned to dust—very full, very cramped, and very man-forgotten.

I had almost said God-forgotten; but that would not be right. Man forgets, but God never does. You see this graveyard is old; and graveyards, like human beings, are neglected when they grow old.

Some may think that remark very cruel. It is cruel; but it is the innate cruelty of man that makes it so. Not a man, not a woman, not a beast, not a bird, not a flower, not a graveyard that has the misfortune to grow old, but what is in some measure neglected. That is the common lot of everything under the sun; and a mere graveyard that is only the custodian of a parcel of dry bones—dear, beautiful bones some of them were once—cannot be made an exception to the rule.

When I entered into this place of tombs, this roofless sepulchre,

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unthinking man had been awakened to a sense of sympathy. It was only a very selfish sense of sympathy after all, and because another mortal had returned to dust and was to be buried there.

Before this dead creature had by his death criticised the deeds of the living, this graveyard was indeed a man-forgotten place. For six weary years the shades reposing there in mute ingloriousness had not been disturbed; there had been no coffin borne along that narrow pathway to be deposited in the receptacle made for it under the drooping limes. And for six years the graveyard had been neglected.

But if the hands of man had been idle, the work of Nature had gone on just the same. Nature, like Time, never waits. It grows on and on, and in the fulness and freedom of its work sometimes grows ugly. I am constrained to say that in this graveyard the unrestricted liberty given to Nature had caused it to exhibit a species of ugliness entirely out of union with decency and the dead.

The pathway was blotted out from the vision by the fat weeds that towered up their bold tops; the grass on the graves, grown long and wild, hid the little heaps under which the dead ones lay; and the trees overhead, the branching limes, had stretched out their boughs like the weird arms of some mysterious monster, and embraced those on the other side of the graveyard; making a dark funeral pall, as it were, to cover out of sight the neglected dead.

It was the abode of desolation as well as the dead. But the most strange and gruesome thing there, growing and battenning on the soil, was an apple-tree! I thought that merry fruit-tree, with its prolific boughs, was strangely out of place there. The Tree of Knowledge flourishing upon the dead bones of departed Warwickshire folk!

Happily, the man employed to make the graveyard decent enough for the reception of another sinner cut down the apple-tree. He did not uproot it—merely cut its trunk down; so that

in another six years that apple-tree will again flourish and bear fruit in that snug and out-of-sight graveyard.

I went and glanced at the new-made grave. It was easy to distinguish it from the others by the colour of the turf and the cross of white flowers that loving hands had deposited on it. This placing of floral emblems upon the dead is a pretty and venerable custom observed in Warwickshire hundreds of years ago ; and I was glad to discover that, where all else was neglected and forgotten, the grave of the newly dead was anointed with the stars of earth's firmament.

Those flowers were the only bit of living colour to be seen in that sombre receptacle of departed ones ; and, doubtless, ere many moons have passed, that grave too will have nothing to distinguish it from the rest. Tennyson finely says :—

Come not when I am dead  
To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,  
To trample round my fallen head  
And vex the unhappy dust thou would'st not save ;  
There let the wind sweep and the plover cry ;  
But thou—go by.

This enjoinder is faithfully carried out in this Warwickshire graveyard. The living *do* go by, and do not vex the dust of those that lie there—not unhappily, I hope, but happier than when in the flesh.





# Under the Sun:

A RURAL SKETCH.





## Under the Sun:

A RURAL SKETCH.

THE world is beautiful now—the world of Leafy Warwickshire—glowing under the sun in all the richness of its fertile and historic loveliness.

Like touches of fire the sun gleams through the green bush, casting its yellow light in fantastic designs upon the emerald carpet. A bird flutters into the golden ray, a gaudy painted chaffinch ; and there is a picture more intensely grand, because of its very naturalness, than the hand of a painter ever limned.

Hundreds of such pictures meet the eye of the pilgrim who walks through the land of gold in the morning. The evening, “in sober livery clad,” has its charms and beauties, which the poet has sung and the painter has painted ; but there is a more glorious and dazzling loveliness in the fields when they are under the sun.

Let us go forth into the landscapes of Warwickshire soon after breakfast on a bright September morning, and copy a few notes from Nature’s own book, which lies open before our eyes inviting record and comment.

In all the freshness of early life, the land pants and glows as our feet touch it. We look down, and it is like walking upon a floor of diamonds ; for every delicate blade of green grass is

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studded with glistening globes of morning dew. The sun is rather late in rising on some of these September mornings, and he is so this morning; for the clock of the village church upon the hill is just chiming the hour of ten and the grass is not yet dry. As Tennyson says:—

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,  
And a dewy splendour falls  
On the little flower.

What suddenly strikes us as strange is the stillness of the morn. Stillness is the heritage of night, when all the world embraces a temporary death; and with the morning has been associated all the music of heaven and earth. We hear the blithe whistle of the cowboy, shaped into the latest comic tune, come skimming along the early winds; also we note, with attentive ear, the merry sound of the huntsman's horn, echoing in the distance from hill to hill. The agreeable rattle of the corn-cutting machine, too, does not pass unobserved.

But where are the birds? Where are Nature's own minstrels, who make the fields and woods an *al fresco* concert-room? Curious indeed. There is scarcely a bird to be seen, and not one has deigned to salute our ear with his musical morning hymn. Remarking upon the entire absence of song at the present time, we are tempted to ask ourselves what would the country do without the birds? Without the silver-throated people of the trees, Nature—so lovely and glorious under the rosy sun—would have lost one of her greatest charms; for beauty, be it never so beautiful, has a far greater fascination when it is accompanied with sweet music.

But where are the birds? we ask again. This seems like the interval of the concert, when the musicians forsake the orchestra and go somewhere to refresh themselves; for do not the birds need refreshment as much as men and women?

It is the birds' breakfast time. This we find out as we near a pretty farmhouse of red brick, set, as it were, in a small valley of gold; for the circling hills are covered with standing corn of a bright yellow colour—in fact, as “yellow as a guinea.” It seems that the rickyard of this farm is the birds' feeding ground.

Hundreds of them fly up and career round our heads as we make a noise with the clap-gate and enter the farmyard. The very ground is alive with them. Their brisk movements, as they trot hither and thither picking up the grains of wheat, give a sort of ripple to the earth, as though it were a bright and lively sea, instead of a mere farmyard strewn with the odds and ends of harvest work.

A bevy of swallows dart and flash in the sunlight; now skimming the earth, now shooting high into the clear blue of the welkin. Here is the gaudy piefinch, with dainty red feet, proudly strutting about among the yellow grain; here the talkative sparrow; there the rambling wagtail; and upon yonder old gatepost sits Robin with the redbreast—the only melancholy figure under the sun of this golden morning. To adapt the immortal bard to our present needs, we may say to yon moping redbreast—

How now, sweet Robin, art thou melancholy?

Mr. Ruskin says that “all good colour is in some degree pensive; the loveliest is melancholy.” Perhaps this explains why the robin, whose ruby breast has the sun-glint upon it so gloriously this morning, is given over to pensiveness. He seems like the bird of sorrow, and as though he were acquainted with grief.

Through the farmyard we go, leaving the feathered people to eat their fill, and return to their vacated orchestra in the

trees. The air is scented with the perfume of the aftermath, mingled with the faint odour of sweet wood-briar. A bee whizzes past our ear on his honey-gathering errand. As the sun gleams upon the yellow of its back, it looks like a spark of fire flying through space.

Now the morning grows in grace like a young child. Stillness gives place to sound. Nature's choristers, heralded by the yellowhammer, who is perched high on a wych-elm, essay to fill the air with music. Breakfast is over with the farm hands. There is a rattling of chains, a neighing of horses, and work is begun in earnest. The woman gleaner goes to the field—one of the happiest creatures under a Warwickshire sun.



# The Midland Herberda:

A SKETCH OF LEAMINGTON PRIORS.



## The Midland Bethesda:

A SKETCH OF LEAMINGTON PRIORS.

IT was Nathaniel Hawthorne who bestowed upon this charming Warwickshire town the poetical appellation of "The Midland Bethesda." After a time, he improved upon that title by calling Leamington "A home for the homeless all the year round." He wrote much about Leamington, in his own bewitching style, for he had sojourned there, and partaken of the comfort which is forthcoming in every well-regulated home.

Then he departed this life, and the "home" lost a true friend; for, although John Ruskin came and professed to be smitten with the beauty of the "Leamington cornfields," the "home" seemed to languish from some cause or other.

Perhaps it was because its comfort-giving properties fell from their high estate. It may have been that the cornfields, with their red poppies and white moon-daisies, began to disappear, and the village to degenerate into a town. "God made the country and man made the town," we are told; and it may be that when the building monster sought to appease his insatiable maw with bricks and mortar, the rural divinities of the place planned a scheme of revenge for being exiled from their home. Anyhow, the "home for the homeless" languished.

It still languishes as a well-ordered health resort, and no one seems to know the reason why. Although in its palmy



days Leamington was the Mecca for the brightest, best, richest, wittiest, and prettiest, it is not so much a "home for the homeless" now as it was then. The old worthies and celebrities are no longer to be seen sauntering up and down the Parade.

No longer the handsome Marquess of Waterford, in superb attire, is "the Cynosure of neighbouring eyes;" Jack Mytton has departed to "the happy hunting grounds;" Sir Edward Mostyn has fled, and taken with him his stable of blood horses; the quaint Mr. Barne no longer sits his white Arab (whose unshorn tail swept the ground in all its native beauty) and perambulates the highways. These are gone, as their prototypes went before; but there are no types to follow.

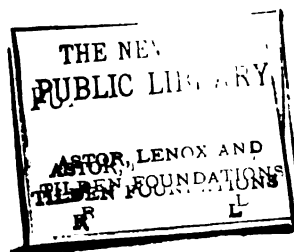
Great changes have been wrought in Leamington since the opening of the present century. In 1808, William Charles Macready, the celebrated tragedian, sojourned there. An interesting entry in his diary will serve to show the condition of "the Midland Bethesda" at that time. He says:—

"Birmingham was the most important of the towns of which my father held the theatres, and there we soon arrived. The summer months were passed there, diversified by a short stay at Leamington, then a small village, consisting only of a few thatched houses—not one tiled or slated; the Bowling Green being the only one where very moderate accommodation could be secured.

"There was in process of erection an hotel of more pretension, which, I fancy, was to be the 'Dog' or 'Greyhound,' but which had some months of work to fit it for the reception of guests. We had the parlour and bedrooms of a huckster's shop—the best accommodation in the place—and used each morning to walk down to the springs across the churchyard, with our little mugs in our hands, for our daily draught of the Leamington waters."



LEAMINGTON: HOLLY WALK AND AVENUE



There is not now a single cottage left with a thatched roof, that primitive but picturesque covering being discontinued in 1843.

But change has made the place prettier than it was in its palmy days, when George IV., "the first gentleman in Europe," followed the example of Macready and imbibed his glass of Spa water, and then returned to the princely Castle at Warwick.

John Ruskin, in "*Præterita*," makes some amusing remarks about this Midland Bethesda. He visited Leamington in 1843, when he was worn by overwork, and was recommended to adopt the advice of the famous Dr. Jephson. The sufferer came down to the Royal Spa and consulted the eminent physician, who examined him for ten minutes and then said to him: "If you will stop here, in Leamington, for six weeks, I will set you right."

But the author of "*The Stones of Venice*" was an unbeliever. He looked upon Dr. Jephson as a quack, "because he was so very positive that he could set me right in such a short period; and I replied to him that I did not want to stop at Leamington."

The wayward youth accordingly fled to the wilder scenery of North Wales, only to be ordered back to Dr. Jephson by his parents. As an obedient son he at once obeyed the mandate; and when he presented himself, "penitently," before the doctor, he was forthwith prescribed six weeks' residence in the garden town—possibly as a punishment. At the end of this period he was dismissed with the following words: "Sir, you may go; your health is in your own hands." Upon which Mr. Ruskin remarks: "Truly, my health was in my own hands, and I immediately reverted, in perfect health, to brown potatoes and cherry pie."

The Leamington Spa waters are just as efficacious now as they were when the author of "*The Seven Lamps of Architec-*

ture" quaffed his morning glass. The wonder is that the public should migrate to foreign shores in quest of what they may find at home with perfect ease. Under Bath Street, at Leamington, there lies an ocean of saline water. It extends from the Pump Room to High Street, and is inexhaustible.

Some idea of the immense volume of water available, may be gathered from the circumstance that the Old Well, or "Camden Well," as it is called, has been largely drawn upon for over a century, and, instead of being reduced, the supply is as great as ever it was. Fifty years ago, this fact inspired the following lines :—

If but one leper cured made Jordan's stream,  
In sacred writ, a venerable theme,  
What honour's to thy sovereign water due  
Where sick, by thousands, do their health renew ?

Apart from the magic of its waters, the Midland Bethesda, by reason of its position, seated as it is in the midst of a county of famous historic associations, deserves additional patronage. If the visitor wishes to forsake for a time the foliage-fringed streets of the town, he can, in less than an hour's walk, tread the green grass leading to Blacklow Hill, where a monument records the spot upon which was beheaded the haughty Piers Graveston, favourite of Edward II., by the "Black Dog" of Arden.

Hard by is Guy's Cliffe, the traditional home of the famous Guy, Earl of Warwick. Here, too, Sarah Kemble, afterwards Mrs. Siddons, lived in the days of her youth, and escaped from it to become the wife of Henry Siddons, "the worst actor in her father's company." Scarcely a mile to the south is the noble Castle of Warwick and its unique collection of art treasures. A few miles to the westward is the neighbourhood hallowed by Shakespeare's immortal name.

About five miles to the north of Leamington is the spacious Park and ancient Abbey of Stoneleigh; and within two miles beyond, the ruined and historic Castle of Kenilworth. To the east, the wayfarer's footsteps may tread the ground of Dunchurch, made famous through its connection with the Gunpowder Plot. Further afield are the Druidical remains of the Rollright Stones; the battlefield of Edge Hill; the unique Elizabethan mansion of Compton Wynnates; the baronial Hall of Maxstoke; and the three tall spires and classic houses of ancient Coventry.

As for Leamington itself, mineral waters and beauty are its cardinal virtues; but it also has other attractions which should make it, as Hawthorne truly said, "a home for the homeless all the year round." Its bathing establishment is complete, and its drainage and water systems the best that science can secure. These, surely, are advantages sufficient to please the most capricious and fastidious of rambles; and if the Midland Bethesda will but to herself be true, she may yet attain to an era of prosperity commensurable with the natural advantages which she has the good fortune to possess.





**Mrs. Siddons and Guy's Cliffe:**

A PLAYER'S ROMANCE.





## Mrs. Siddons and Guy's Cliffe:

A PLAYER'S ROMANCE.

ONE of the beauties of Leafy Warwickshire is the old ancestral domain of Guy's Cliffe. It is both historical and theatrical. No one questions the legend of the rock from which it takes its name; few even question the marvellous traditions of the Giant Guy; but with its connection with the most eminent tragic actress the British stage has possessed, not many are familiar.

We propose to relate what we have discovered about Sarah Kemble, afterwards Mrs. Siddons, in connection with Guy's Cliffe.

On the 14th of July, 1755, this wonderful woman entered upon the stage of life. Says the melancholy Jaques:—

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players ;

and Sarah Kemble, daughter of Roger Kemble, a "strolling player, took up her cue and played her part greatly to the end.

We quote from Holcroft, the actor-playwright, who was a member of Kemble's company which performed at Warwick, an account of one of this great actress's early appearances—probably her first appearance—in which she quite failed to please the audience or to satisfy the requirements of her parents.

Holcroft says : "The company of which old Mr. Kemble was the manager was more respectable than many other companies of strolling players, but it was not in so flourishing a condition as to place the manager beyond the immediate reach of the smiles or frowns of fortune. Of this the following anecdote may be cited as an instance:—

"A benefit had been fixed for some of the family, in which Miss Kemble, then a little girl, was to come forward in some part as a juvenile prodigy. The taste of the audience was not, it seems, so accommodating as in the present day, and the extreme youth of the performer disposed the gallery to noise and disorder, instead of approbation. Their turbulent dissatisfaction quite disconcerted the child, and she was retiring bashfully from the stage, when her mother, who was a woman of high spirit, alarmed for the success of her little actress, came forward, and, leading the child to the front of the house, made her repeat 'The Fable of the Boys and the Frogs,' which entirely turned the tide of popular opinion in her favour.

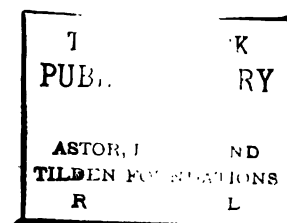
"What must the feelings of the same mother have been when the child became the admiration of the whole kingdom, the first seeing of whom was an event in every person's life never to be forgotten!"

When she was only twelve years old, and before she was introduced to Lady Bertie Greatheed, of Guy's Cliffe, we discover Sarah Kemble performing in the neighbouring City of Worcester. In the cast of the playbill there was a young actor rejoicing in the name of Henry Siddons. What need to recite what everybody acquainted with the history of the stage already knows?

But for those who do not—Sarah Kemble and young Siddons dared to love each other, despite the rage of old Roger Kemble, who vowed that should his daughter ever wed an actor, she should be no daughter of his. Under these circum-



GUY'S CLIFFE FROM THE RIVER BANK



stances, the parents of the future tragedienne discouraged the attentions of young Siddons, and kept the watchful eye of a Shylock upon their daughter.

No wonder that these domestic rigours became distasteful to Sarah Kemble. Her home, such as it was, grew miserable to her, and she resolved to leave it.

Then came her connection with Guy's Cliffe, near Warwick—a spot clothed with the history and romance of ages. She enrolled herself as maid to Lady Bertie Greatheed; and there, for one whole year, this girl expatriated herself from that profession of which in after years she became so brilliant an ornament.

But in the meantime she did not miss an opportunity of meeting her lover. When Roger Kemble's company performed within a league of Guy's Cliffe, Henry Siddons made off to interview his love.

This meeting by stealth, however, in the dim groves and magic caves of one of Nature's loveliest spots, could not last for long; and so, one happy morning, Sarah Kemble bade her mistress a hasty adieu—much to the regret of that lady, who had conceived a warm liking for her romantic maid—and, with a heart and purse equally light, flew to the arms of her lover, who, in a few hours, made her his wife.

When Sarah Kemble became Mrs. Siddons, then it was too late to ask the question—

Will the flame that you're so rich in  
Light a fire in the kitchen,  
Or the little God of Love turn the spit?

The married twain had no choice but to join a company of strollers of no great respectability. Mrs. Siddons, however, through all the drawbacks, speedily became the world's favourite;

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albeit she was never the favourite of Davy Garrick, who was such a cormorant after applause himself that he could submit to no rivalry.

From being the maid, Mrs. Siddons (*née* Kemble) became the absolute Regent of Guy's Cliffe. Lady Greatheed became her warmest friend, and the Earl of Warwick her steadfast patron. Somewhat later in her career, her former master, Mr. Greatheed, wrote a tragedy, founded on a Spanish story, which he dedicated to Mrs. Siddons, in admiration of her talents as an actress and a woman.

It was published in 1788 under the title of "The Regent," and in the same year was produced at Drury Lane Theatre, with Mrs. Siddons in the leading *rôle*. In his dedication, Mr. Greatheed thus expressed his admiration of this great tragic actress :—

"Would there were some language sacred to sincerity, in which I might express, without suspicion of compliment, the true sense I have of your perfections; but there is none. This much, however, I must say—your talents were in my view while I composed the poem which I here lay before my country. To draw a character worthy of you was my ambition, and if I have succeeded I am perfectly satisfied. I have only to add the wish that, united in future fame as in present friendship, my name may descend with yours to posterity."

The wish, unfortunately, proved vain, as "The Regent" did not command success, and was withdrawn after the third performance.

Visitors to Guy's Cliffe, now the seat of Lord Algernon Percy, will, in the knowledge that this romantic abode had a close association with Mrs. Siddons, find increased attractions there, where there are already so many.

# Old Baginton Castle:

THE ROMANCE OF A MOATED GRANGE.





## Old Baginton Castle:

### THE ROMANCE OF A MOATED GRANGE.

**I**N Warwickshire, there are few habitations clothed thicker with the hoar of centuries and the magic of history than Old Baginton Castle.

It was a fabric of great antiquity. Long anterior to the Conquest of Britain by the hardy Normans, under the flag of William the Conqueror, this castle, standing within a few miles of ancient Stoneleigh Abbey, had stood proof to the dangers of the time. Who its lords were at that early period it is difficult to accurately determine; but at the Conquest, the estate of Baginton came into the possession of one Turchill, along with the Manor of Leamington, at the time when that warlike nobleman, called by courtesy the Earl of Warwick, was employed by William the First to repair and enlarge the ancient Castle of Warwick.

Soon after his succession, however, the Conqueror mistrusted the loyalty of Turchill, and removed him from Warwickshire and its dependencies.

For upwards of two hundred years, Baginton Castle had various lords for its proprietors; and in the year 1383 the estate was purchased by Sir William Bagot, a bold and valorous knight, who took possession in the sixth year of the reign of the thoughtless and prodigal Richard the Second.

This staunch adherent of the King found Baginton Castle

well adapted in strength and security for those warlike times. He made it his abode—although he possessed many other stately castles in various parts of the kingdom—and caused a moat to be made round it, and supplied it with every means of defence.

This ancient stronghold reminds one of "The Moated Grange" in which Mariana, the young and beautiful, pined in solitude; and, in truth, the warlike Sir William had a daughter who, in love matters, was almost as unfortunate as that "faire ladye."

Sir William Bagot was a stern though loving father, and to him his daughter was the apple of his eye. He stood high in favour with the King, and, being a man of ambitious nature, had already selected his son-in-law. But his daughter was also a girl of spirit. She had made her choice, and, needless to say, it was not the elect of her father. Upon the young and handsome Earl of Salisbury she had fixed her love, and he had requited her affection with true courtly ardour.

One night, there were princely revels at Baginton Castle. Among the guests was the Earl of Salisbury; and though Sir William outwardly extended to him the semblance of hospitality and courtesy, he inwardly chafed at his presence.

A young and faithful page was the constant attendant upon Sir William's daughter, and the legend runs that something more than mere faithfulness to his mistress, ran in the veins of this youthful servitor. However that may be, the youth gave up his life in the service of his lady.

The Earl of Salisbury and his love were in a remote part of the grounds, with the page lying a short distance from them, when Sir William Bagot, flushed with wine and burning with anger, rushed into the presence of his daughter, drawn sword in hand, intent upon the blood of young Salisbury.

Quick as thought, the young page interposed his body between them, and received a death wound in the heart.

The Lord of Baginton was aghast at the deed, as he very much loved the youth; and in recognition of the crime, he caused a cedar tree to be planted upon the spot where the blood of the unfortunate page fell. He also agreed to the marriage of his daughter with the object of his former wrath.

It was at this Baginton Castle that Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, slept, on the night of September the 15th, 1397, and issued therefrom the following morning to Gosford Green, near Coventry, to fight that memorable combat with Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk. Bolingbroke was the son of John of Gaunt, who finished that portion of Kenilworth Castle known as Lancaster's Buildings.

In the early months of the year 1600, Baginton was purchased by William Bromley, a descendant of Sir Walter Bromley of Staffordshire, who flourished in the reign of King John. This gentleman was elected Member of Parliament for Warwickshire, in the Tory interest, during the second Parliament of William the Third.

Baginton Hall, on the site of the famous Castle, was destroyed by fire on the 21st of December, 1706, the event being thus recorded in the diary of William Bromley:—

“On the 21st of December, 1706, when I was at London, attending the Parliament as Member thereof, and the greater part of my family with me there, my mansion at Baginton was entirely consumed by fire, with most of my goods and furniture, my library (consisting of about 4,000 volumes in English, Latin, French, Greek, Italian, and Spanish), and all the writings and evidences of my several estates.”

The Hall was re-built near to the old site by Francis Smith, an eminent builder of Warwick, who was likewise employed in the re-building of St. Mary's Church in that town, after the great fire of 1694.

William Bromley was chosen Speaker of the House of

Commons in 1710, and was called by Bishop Burnet "the eminent leader of the Tory Party." He died at Baginton in 1732, and was buried in the mausoleum there. His descendant was the late Mr. Bromley Davenport, celebrated as a keen sportsman and a facile writer of hunting songs.

In October, 1889, Baginton Hall again fell a victim to the fire fiend, and as late as the year 1893 had not been re-built. Baginton is a pretty sequestered village, three miles south of Coventry. It has an ancient and curious church, which is seen now exactly as it appeared 150 years ago.



# Coaching Days at Leamington:

"THE TANTIVY TROT."

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## Coaching Days at Leamington:

### "THE TANTIVY TROT."

**I**N the latter years of the last century, and the early years of the present, Leamington Priors—so called from the fact that the Priors of Kenilworth owned the estate—was so hemmed in, and sequestered from the influences of civilisation, that its three hundred and fifteen people were almost unacquainted with the sound of a coach horn.

To the ears of modern Warwickshire people, dinned with the shriek of the railway whistle, and the rumblings of trains over bridges, this may sound strange; but it is none the less a fact. So early as 1700, a stage coach, called "The Fly," ran from Birmingham to London on Monday in each week, and reached the city after four days' hard travelling; but it is not recorded as having passed through Leamington.

In truth, the old London Road—now called High Street—was in so dangerous a condition, from "The Black Dog" to the other side of Myton, that no coach could pass along it. It must have been much in the same state, or perhaps in a worse condition, in 1575, when Queen Elizabeth, journeying from the village of Long Itchington, had to go round by Chesterton and Oakley Wood to reach Warwick, where Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and his brother, Ambrose, "the good Earl" of Warwick, were awaiting her.

This is the route, presumably, that "The Fly" took, in



default of the direct road being in respectable order. Leamington Priors, indeed, seems to have been so barricaded from the outer world by its mud banks, that even the mail coaches, which were put upon the road in 1784, could not come any nearer than Warwick, from which town any letters for the people of Leamington had to be fetched by some bold villager on a pack-horse; and he must, indeed, have been a hardy individual to brave the dangers which a mail coach dare not brave.

The mail coaches, however, used to carry a few passengers as well as the letter-bags; and, doubtless, the risk of being overturned in the rutted lane of Myton was too great to be encountered. At any rate, the post-horn never sounded through the village lanes of Leamington when Ben Satchwell was in the flesh.

No doubt the mail coach routes were the same as the stage coach. There were two routes, one of which touched no nearer Leamington than Warwick, and the other no nearer than Coventry. The chief route through the Midlands was by the celebrated London and Holyhead Road. The distance covered by coaches along this journey was no less than two hundred and sixty-one miles.

The coaches started from the famous coach-house, "The Swan with Two Necks," Ladd Lane, London, and proceeded along their journey as follows:—South Mims, fifteen miles; Redburn, twenty-six; Brickhill, forty-four; Stony Stratford, fifty-three; Towcester, sixty-one; Daventry, seventy-three; Dunchurch, eighty-one; and Coventry, ninety-two miles. The coaches on this route, therefore, did not come nearer than nine miles to Leamington.

By the other route they stopped at Warwick. Starting from "The King's Arms," on Holborn Bridge, the coaches stopped to change horses and take in and set down passengers at Aylesbury, Bicester, Banbury, Fenny Compton, Southam, and

Warwick; and on to Birmingham—a distance of one hundred and nineteen miles.

If contact with the outer world is a sign of civilisation taking place within, then “the Toyshop of Europe” must have been growing civilised in 1745—a date at which Leamington was as little known as the village of Leek Wootton is now. A distance of twenty-two miles only separated Leamington from Birmingham; yet in George the Second’s reign the former had never seen a stage coach through its parish, while the latter was a noted coaching town, and at that time ran a “flying coach” to London in two days when the roads were good.

It must be remembered, however, that Birmingham, in 1745, was spoken of in *England’s Gazetteer* as “a large, well-built, and populous town, noted for the most ingenious artificers in boxes, buckles, buttons, and other iron and steel wares, wherein such multitudes of people are employed that they are sent all over Europe; and here is a continual noise of hammers, anvils, and files.” On the other hand, Leamington Priors was a small village, with less than thirty inhabitants.

It was, no doubt, in the “twenties” and “thirties” that Leamington began to show signs of coaching activity. Then the tide of prosperity, consequent upon the discovery of the Spa-water wells, was flowing into the town, and, therefore, made the authorities more eager to place Leamington upon a better footing for the introduction of visitors. The Myton Road must accordingly have been improved, as also the Radford Road, which was in almost as forlorn and impassable a condition as the former; for in the commencement of the “thirties” Leamington had no less than forty-five well-appointed coaches running to and from various places.

This is one very clear proof of the amazing quickness with which Leamington leaped into popular favour, and started an era in coaching which is not likely to be repeated.

There were four coach offices attached to four of the principal hotels. Of these, the Bath Hotel sent out every day a file of nineteen coaches; and a very pretty sight they must have been in their gay coats of paint, and with their gorgeous-liveried post-boys, "whips," and guards. Every evening, at a quarter-past eight, "The London Royal Mail," with its red wheels and red body, with black letters painted on the door panels, rattled off, drawn by four or six horses, *en route* for St. Martin's-le-Grand, with the letter-bags containing the letters of the dukes, duchesses, marquesses, earls, barons, and gentlemen residing there.

In connection with mail coaches, it may be of interest at this point to state that, during the great snowstorms of 1836, the Birmingham mail coach was more than once snowed up, and the guards had to journey to London on horseback with the letter-bags in front of them.

"The Royal Sovereign," bound for London, with much yellow about it, was a stage coach which went from the Bath coach office every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at a quarter to nine. It was followed by "The Crown Prince," another London coach, which started at a quarter-past nine.

The celebrated Cambridge coach, "The Tally-ho!" came dashing out of the Bath yard every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning, at a quarter to ten. Every morning at eight, Sunday excepted, "The Triumph" drove off to the City of Oxford; so that, in 1833, Leamington was in direct daily communication with one or both of the older Universities.

In addition to these, coaches to Bath, Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Northampton, Stamford, Leicester, and Birmingham ran from "The Bath" every morning; and to Liverpool and Manchester every afternoon. Coaches from the same hostelry rattled away each morning to Coventry, Stratford-on-Avon, and the cathedral City of Worcester.

The coach office at Copps's "Royal Hotel"—once the most fashionable hotel in Leamington, but long since demolished to admit the railway—had eighteen coaches on its books. Most of these ran to the places above enumerated, and were, in fact, the same coaches, starting a few minutes later than from the Bath.

The London "Royal Express" started from the Court Street entrance of the Royal Mews at a quarter-past seven o'clock. At the early hour of four in the morning, the Liverpool "Royal Express" began its journey. "The Eagle," bound for Cambridge, ran from the Royal Hotel every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning, at half-past nine—just a quarter-of-an-hour before "The Tally-ho," driven to the same destination. A "Bedford Coach," the only one from Leamington, made journeys from Copps's three times a week—Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

From the renowned Bedford Hotel—the scene of the famous leap on horseback of the celebrated Jack Mytton—now represented by the London and Midland Bank, five coaches ran daily—"The Nimrod" to London, "The Imperial" to Cheltenham and Gloucester, and the others to Shrewsbury, Oxford, and Birmingham. The coach office of the Bedford Hotel was in Bedford Street.

Besides all these stage coaches, which brought people to Leamington from all parts, and made the inhabitants more familiar with the sound of the horn than they had ever been before, there were two 'buses plying between the Royal Spa and the City of Spires. The town was also full of private coaches of various kinds and colours.

With so brilliant a record, then, Leamington Priors, at the commencement of "the thirties," had a close association with coaching. But the stage coaching of those days was very different to the pleasure coaching which came into vogue at a

later period. Stage coaching was subject to restrictions and inconveniences quite unknown to the pleasure coaching of to-day.

An Act of Parliament, passed in the year 1832, provided that stage coaches should not carry more than one person on the box, and not more than three on the front and three on the back. The others, if more than seven, were to be placed in some other convenient seats. This Act also gave to justices, road surveyors, or toll collectors, powers which in these days would not be tolerated. Any of the officials mentioned could stop a coach, at any given point, for the purpose of measuring the luggage and counting the passengers. A refusal to allow this espionage incurred a penalty of five pounds.

Those only who have been coaching under these difficulties, can correctly estimate the inconvenience and annoyance thereby occasioned. The pleasure coach escaped these rigours; for, when it was put on the road, the law had relaxed.

It was in 1844 that Leamington began to lose the sound of stage coaches from its streets. At that date the railways had commenced to make their inroads, and, indeed, had already begun to run the coach off the highway; so that in Leamington the career of the stage coach was short, if glorious.

In the days when the Leamington Steeplechases were first held, between the years 1837 and 1840, the pleasure coaches of the Marquis of Waterford, Sir Edward Mostyn, Captain Lamb, and others were features of the streets, as pronounced as the scarlet hunting-coat was; and it was no doubt at that time that Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer—afterwards Lord Lytton—formed his acquaintance with Leamington, which he mentions in "My Novel;" his brother, Henry Lytton Bulwer, being about that time Member of Parliament for the City of Coventry.

As the Royal Spa went out of vogue, and the men of fashion migrated to other resorts, the pleasure coach became a less distinctive feature; and it was not for a long time



"THE TANTIVY TROT"

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afterwards that the streets echoed to the rattle of the four-in-hand and the sound of the coach horn.

The late Lord Aylesford revived the pleasure coach in April, 1878, driving between Birmingham and Coventry during the summer months, and sometimes passing through Leamington. In 1880, "The Shakespeare Coach" trotted out from the Regent Hotel yard on summer mornings, bound for Stratford-on-Avon. Since Lord Aylesford's time, pleasure coaches have been driven from the Regent Hotel successively by Captain Riddell, Mr. Frank Osborne, Mr. Craven, the late Mr. Jennings, and Mr. Hans Blackwood, to various places of interest in the historic neighbourhood.

It is scarcely probable, however, that a revival of coaching, under the conditions adopted by these gentlemen "whips," is at present meditated. Pleasure coaching is a somewhat costly pastime, and has hitherto been confined to the higher class of pleasure seekers. If coaching is to be popularised in Warwickshire—and why should it not be?—it must be made to fit in with modern requirements and modern conveniences; then there is no doubt it can be made successful.

Leamington is peculiarly adapted for the pastime. It is within easy access of all the chief county spots of historical, antiquarian, and literary interest, of which many residents and visitors are almost, or entirely, ignorant. Coaching parties would, therefore, not only acquire information of a decidedly valuable character, but they would acquire it under the most pleasant conditions, and would assist in establishing a method of travelling that would be productive of mutual benefit to the Royal Spa and the public at large.

It may be well to conclude this sketch of the "Coaching Days at Leamington" with the well-known Warwickshire coaching ballad, "The Tantivy Trot."

These famous verses were written in 1834, by the late Mr.

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Egerton Warburton, a Cheshire squire of good repute, for Cracknell, the coachman of "The Birmingham Tantivy," who once drove it, at a sitting, a distance of one hundred and twenty-five miles.

#### THE TANTIVY TROT.

Here's to the old ones of four-in-hand fame—  
Harrison, Peyton, and Ward, sir ;  
Here's to the past ones that after them came—  
Ford and Lancashire Lord, sir.  
Let the steam pot  
Hiss till it's hot,  
Give me the speed of the Tantivy Trot.

Here's to the team, sir, all harnessed to start,  
Brilliant in Brummagem leather ;  
Here's to the waggoner, skilled in the art  
Coupling the cattle together.  
Let the steam pot, &c.

Here's to the dear little damsels within,  
Here's to the swells on the top, sir ;  
Here's to the music in three feet of tin,  
And here's to the tapering crop, sir.  
Let the steam pot, &c.

Here's to the shape that is shown the near side,  
Here's to the blood on the off, sir ;  
Limbs with no check to the freedom of stride !  
Wind without whistle or cough, sir.  
Let the steam pot, &c.

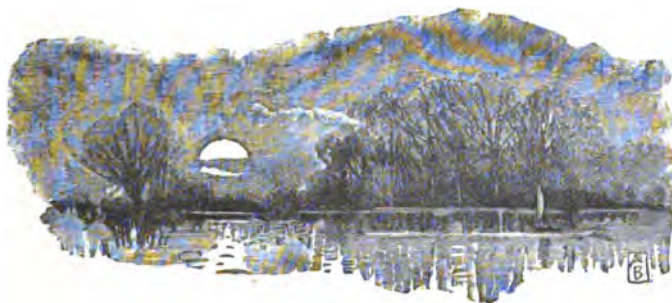
Here's to the arm that can hold 'em when gone,  
Still to a gallop inclined, sir ;  
Heads to the front with no bearing rein on,  
Tails with no cruppers behind, sir.  
Let the steam pot, &c.

Here's to the dragsmen I've dragged into song—  
Salisbury, Mountain, and Co., sir ;  
Here's to the Cracknell that cracks them along,  
Five twenty times at a go, sir !  
Let the steam pot, &c.

Here's to MacAdam, the Mac of all Macs,  
Here's to the road we ne'er tire on ;  
Let me but roll o'er the granite he cracks,  
Ride ye who like it on iron.  
Let the steam pot  
Hiss till it's hot,  
Give me the speed of the Tantivy Trot.

When the writer of "Leafy Warwickshire" was editor of *The Rambler* (a Warwickshire topographical journal, published at Leamington in 1893), he printed "The Tantivy Trot" with the fourth and fifth verses inadvertently omitted. The omission drew a letter from the Rev. H. J. Torre, Vicar of Norton Curliu, near Warwick, in which he said :—

"My old Oxford recollections recoiled at finding you had suppressed those two verses, which are quite as clever and appropriate as the others. I used to travel from Oxford to Birmingham by that coach occasionally, and the song was a standing dish at our supper parties."





# *At the Sign of the Lion:*

A REMINISCENCE OF THE GUNPOWDER PLOT.



## At the Sign of the Lion:

A REMINISCENCE OF THE GUNPOWDER PLOT.

**O**N the south-west side of the old church at Dunchurch, in Warwickshire—the shire that is so inseparably woven into the history of the Gunpowder Plot--there stood, in the days when Shakespeare was earning his fame, an old pack-saddle inn, known as “The Sign of the Lion.”

It was a picturesque half-timbered house, and was erected early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. On the front of the house was the date of its erection (1563), the letters being formed of that “dab and wattle” which in olden times was so extensively used in Warwickshire, and which is to be observed now in the construction of many of the cottages in village and hamlet.

The landlord of this inn was one Morrisen, and his man-servant bore the name of George Prince—a truly royal name for a barman.

Even in a shire so thickly studded with historical associations as “Leafy Warwickshire,” this quaint old hostel stands out boldly, uniting this century with those long gone down the abyss of time. It was at this identical inn that Robert Catesby, gentleman, of Lapworth, in the county of Warwick, met some of his fellow-conspirators on the 5th of November, 1605, after the failure of the Plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

As this important, nearly momentous, event in English his-

tory, teeming as it does with dramatic incident, was planned and matured in Warwickshire, and affected so many of the best families in the county, it may be worth while to make some note of the occurrence.

It has been popularly supposed that the inn at Dunchurch at which Catesby and his party held their rendezvous was "The Dun Cow;" and there was ample room for the supposition. In most of the evidence connected with the conspirators, the house is merely spoken of as "the inn." The fact, also, that "The Dun Cow" was the principal inn at Dunchurch at the time of the Plot and after, lent colour to the impressions entertained by learned antiquaries and others interested in the history of Warwickshire.

"The Dun Cow" was an inn in the middle of the seventeenth century, and could boast of some very distinguished guests. George Fox, the celebrated Quaker, as is shown by an entry in his journal, lodged there in 1655. In Ogilby's "Britannia, or Book of Roads," published in 1698, "The Dun Cow" is mentioned as the leading inn. Upon these and other such weighty suppositions and arguments, the meeting place of Catesby and his fellow-conspirators was regarded as "The Dun Cow."

In 1861, however, the late Mr. Matthew Bloxham, the antiquarian, of Rugby, made a journey to the State Paper Office, London, and was privileged to peruse the original documents relating to the Gunpowder Plot. He there made the discovery that the inn where Catesby and the other traitors met was not "The Dun Cow," as had for so long been erroneously supposed, but "The Sign of the Lion."

The evidence which led to this discovery was taken before Sir Euseby Andrew, Knight, and Mr. Thomas Burneby, at Daventry, on the 7th day of November, 1605, and was as follows :—

"THE EXAMINATION OF BENNETTE LEESON, OF LEDGERS

ASHBY. — Bennette Leeson, of Ledgers Ashby, saith that on Tuesday, at night, being the Vth of November, there came one unto his forge on horsebacke, enquireinge the way to Dunchurch, offering to content him well if he would direct him thither ; whereupon he went and rode before him.

“ And presently there followed him some 12 horsemen more, amongst whom was Mr. Robert Catesby, all which (as he supposed) came from the Lady Ann Catesby. So he conducted them to Dunchurch, where they alighted at ‘The Sign of the Lion,’ at one Morrisen’s house ; and this examiner walked their horses some quarter of an hour, and for his pains he had 2 shillings.

“ And then Thomas Bates, Mr. Catesby his man, came to him and entreated him to direct him the way to Rugby, which presently he did, and had for his pains twelve-pence. At which place, as soon as he came, he mette with nine more at the Bayliffe’s house at Rugby, who were very well mounted, and came presently away with Thomas Bates and this examiner to Dunchurch, where they found Mr. Catesby and the rest of the companie ; all which, within a quarter of an hour after their coming, rode together Coventrie way.”

The village blacksmith of Ledgers Ashby thus disposes of an erroneous impression, and makes an important contribution to the history of the Plot.

There can be no doubt as to the correctness of Bennette Leeson’s statement ; for, although there is no mention of “The Lion” in Ogilby’s “Britannia” of 1689, there are or were seventeenth century maps of Dunchurch in the possession of Lady Scott’s family of Cawston Lodge, which amply endorse the evidence of Leeson. On these maps the Dunchurch estate of the Duke of Buccleuch is shown ; “The Sign of the Lion” is marked out ; and the closes adjoining are designated “The Lion Closes.”



This inn, therefore, is of exceptional interest in a shire where many of the quaintly-built Elizabethan houses, still to be met with in the neighbourhood, are storied urns, so to speak, in which lies enclosed the romantic lore of centuries. "The Sign of the Lion" certainly deserves to be pointed out, or the site upon which it stood, to the legions of travellers who visit this famous shire, called by Drayton—

"The heart of England."

That Warwickshire should be associated with treason to the Crown may be a little disappointing to loyal subjects of the present day. The treason of Robert Catesby and his co-conspirators was, however, due to religious rather than political differences.

This man sprang from a family of high rank. He was born, in 1573, at Bushwood Hall, in the county of Warwick, and the remains of his ancestral home, with the moat and bowling-green, may still be seen nestling amid the hills and vales in the neighbourhood of Lapworth; but, curiously enough, his certificate of baptism does not appear in the register of that parish. He was probably secretly baptised by a priest of the Romish Church, as his family were adherents to that faith.

His father was Sir William Catesby, a descendant of that Catesby who was the favourite minister of Richard the Third, and who, after being taken prisoner at Bosworth Field, was executed for high treason, and buried in the church of Ashby St. Ledgers, near Rugby. His mother was a daughter of Sir Robert Throckmorton, of Coughton Court—another Warwickshire mansion of much historical interest.

Robert Catesby himself is brought into closer connection with Leamington and the neighbourhood by his marriage with Catherine, daughter of the second Sir Thomas Leigh—created

first Baron Leigh, in 1645, by Charles the First—of Stoneleigh Abbey, an ancestor of the present Lord Leigh.

In 1598, Lady Ann Catesby became a widow, and then her son, Robert, and his wife went to reside with her in the ancient house of the family at Ashby St. Ledgers. It was here that Robert brooded over the wrong done to his family by reason of their religion, and the heavy fines imposed upon his mother; and the outcome of his brooding was that desperate and diabolical enterprise which brought infamy and death upon him and those who were involved with him.

Unlike Guido Fawkes, and seven more of his fellow-conspirators, Robert Catesby was fortunate in escaping the scaffold; but he was killed in an attack with Sir Richard Walsh, High Sheriff of Worcestershire, at Holbeach, on the borders of Staffordshire, on the day after the failure of the Plot.

These few items connected with a remarkable history should serve to whet the appetite of those who desire to know something of their country's past career. It has with truth been frequently said that in the whole circle of learning there is nothing so absorbing as the study of history; and in Warwickshire the student may discover historical mines, full of riches and full of surprises.





# Story of the Old Warwick Prison:

THE EXECUTION OF THE LAUREL WATER POISONER.



## Story of the Old Warwick Prison:

### THE EXECUTION OF THE LAUREL WATER POISONER.

**W**E latter-day people find a great fascination in the gloomy records of our prisons—the gaols and bridewells of the past—where the scenes that took place within their thick and frowning walls read, in the civilization of the present day, like so many dark episodes of barbaric times, when the laws of the land did not hold to the beautiful mandate of Shakespeare, and temper their justice with mercy.

Before the all-powerful pens of Charles Dickens and Charles Reade had caused the fierce light of publicity to be turned upon the interiors of our gaols and mad-houses, untold agonies were suffered, and deeds of brutal ferocity were perpetrated, in the narrow cells and dungeons of our prisons, and in the padded rooms of our mad-houses; and many a dark drama has been enacted inside the ponderous walls, whence no cry of distress could pierce the outer world.

We hope those days are dead; albeit, it is only forty-two years ago that the most harrowing acts of cruelty were perpetrated inside the Birmingham Gaol, which, indeed, as the tales were told with awful minuteness of detail at the Warwick Autumn Assizes of 1853, afforded the great novelist, Charles Reade, the text for that fine and dramatic work, "It is Never Too Late to Mend."

Dark deeds were, doubtless, enacted in the Old Warwick Prison, which, happily for future criminals and breakers of the

law, came under the notice of the famous John Howard, one of the most noble philanthropists the world ever had, and whom the equally-celebrated Dr. Darwin thus apostrophises :—

And now, Philosophy ! thy rays divine  
Dart round the globe from Zembla to the Line ;  
From realm to realm, with cross or crescent crowned,  
Where'er mankind and misery are found ;  
O'er burning sands, deep waves, or wilds of snow,  
Thy Howard, journeying, seeks the house of woe.

When we pass the spot where the Old Prison used to be in Barrack Street, and which now re-echoes to the stirring tramp of citizen soldiers, we can imagine ourselves living one hundred years ago.

All the horrid scenes rise up and pass in review before our tear-bedimmed gaze ! Here is the black and dismal prison, with its strong and smoked walls, and its clanking iron gates, that clap to with a thundering sound which sends an icy chill over the heart ; and, again, as we stand in the shadow of a doorway on the other side of the dull cut, called by courtesy a street, we can see a melancholy troop of men slowly wending their way across the stony prison yard. There are several stern-faced warders there ; and at the back of them we can see the Governor and the Chaplain of the prison, walking along with sober and solemn stride, beside a man with a strange, sad face, that this morning looks on the world for the last time !

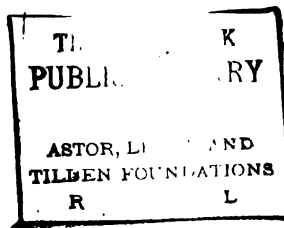
Can this be an execution ? Yes ; for look at the mob of wild and motley people pouring along the narrow ways, mounting the Saltisford Rock, and crowding the old Bridewell wall !

This is the morning, sure enough—the dark daybreak of Monday, April the 2nd, 1781—that is fixed for the execution of the notorious Captain Donellan for the murder of his brother-in-law, Sir Theodosius Boughton, by poisoning him with laurel water. Here is the Captain, once gallant, and gay, and witty



THE OLD WARWICK PRISON





(as the people of his race & Irish race always are), being led to his death from the Old Prison at Warwick, at which we are looking with so mournful a stare, on this damp and murky morning, more than one hundred years ago.

The prison in Barrick Street, not far from the ancient Market Place which teems with history, is the place where the romantic Draculan was confined, where he lodged for the last time on earth, and from the gates of which he is now marching bravely to his ignominious doom, through the gaping and vulgar stare of a blood-thirsty mob.

It is a plaguy dark morning, although the prison bell is just tolling out the hour of seven; at which hour the convict is to bid the world "good-night," because the hangman has two more necks to break at Washwood Heath the same morning, for a murder at Birmingham; so the laurel water poisoner must be roused from his cheerless cell and plank bed an hour earlier. Well, an hour more or less is of trifling account to a practically dead man.

At the prison gates stands a frowning coach, draped in deep mourning, and furnished in consideration of the prisoner's rank, into which the doomed man steps, accompanied by the High Sheriff, and is dismally walked to what is now the extreme end of Wallace Street; for in those days executions were held on that spot.

There the multitude is fearfully congested, all the thousand heads stretching themselves to catch a glimpse of the prisoner. He calmly leaves the coach and ascends the temporary stage on which the horrid gibbet is fixed, and which dangles weirdly in the morning gloom. He does not even shudder at the dreadful things, or revolt from the touch of the masked Jack Ketch; but the spectators of the ghastly scene do, and a cold shiver runs through the mob as the prisoner once more, in a firm voice, asserts his innocence of the crime, and asks the people to pray for him.

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But now the moment has come ! The vast phalanx of on-lookers hold their breath in that frightful period of excitement which is the precursor of death, as the white cap shuts out for ever the face of Captain Donellan from the sight of his fellow men—and women ; the nimble fingers of the hangman put the noose round his neck ; and in another instant the body of the convict is dangling from the cross-beams of the gallows !

After the dreadful deed is done, and all that is left of the dashing Donellan is swinging from the gibbet in Wallace Street, we are carried off our feet by a portion of the surging mob to the gates of the Old Prison once more ; the seekers of blood tramping their way in the hangman's wake to Washwood Heath, intent on seeing two more of their fellow creatures "polished off," as their slang has it ; and in front of the dark gaol we can form some idea of the dark and damp underground dungeons where the "clank, clank" of the chained inmates sends a shudder through our frame.

But Howard, the minister of light in dark places, came to the Old Warwick Prison at the end of the last century, and what he saw there he denounced in the most vigorous language—all the hideousness of the debtors' cells, and all the mad-driving circumstances of the lash and the silent system. And he did a grand work by exposing the malpractices put into execution there—a work which should keep his name alive in the historic town of Warwick ; for he made plans for an improved prison, which the authorities were not slow to adopt.

His solicitude for the criminals pent up in dreary cells—without light, with little food, with much lash, and the terrible punishment-jacket—inspired a kindred feeling in the heart of the then High Sheriff of the County, Mr. Henry Christopher Wise, of Woodcote, near Warwick, who, amongst other good works, placed an alms-box in the Debtors' Prison in 1798, on the front of which were written the following simple and touching words :—

Oh! ye whose hours exempt from sorrows flow,  
Behold the seat of pain, and want, and woe;  
Think, while your hands the entreated alms extend,  
That what to us ye give to God ye lend.

There have been some weird and ghastly tragedies enacted at the Old Warwick Prison: we mean persons hanged in front of the prison gates during the last sixty or seventy years. Oh! what a time it was for the tumultuous mobs of those days—the lovers of thievery, sensation, and blood!

Here, on the morning of the 9th of April, 1820, was the beautiful though wretched woman, Ann Hatrey, brought to the gallows for the murder of Mrs. Dormer, of the Dial House Farm, on Chesford Bridge, a locality between Stoneleigh and Kenilworth. The crime was a most atrocious one, and created an immense sensation in the county; therefore, it is no marvel that the crowds were vast and low—the scum of Coventry, the thieves and roughs of Birmingham, and the riotous herds of rogues and vagabonds which then infested the neighbourhood—which had been drawn thither, vulture-like, at the scent of blood!

The woman was hanged amid the jeers, curses, and jests of the howling mob.

In the same year, a few months later, there was a double execution in front of the prison gates. The culprits were George Butler and Joseph Peace, who were hanged for the shooting of John Seamly, at Kenilworth. This fine debauch for execution-mongers was eclipsed on the 14th of April, 1821, when four criminals—Nathaniel Quinney, Henry Adams, Thomas Hatrey (this was the brother of the miserable woman, Ann Hatrey, who was hung just one year before), and Samuel Sidney—were executed for the murder of Mr. Hirons, of Alveston.

In 1830, a double execution again drew a vile herd of human creatures before the gates of Old Warwick Prison. Those unlucky men, John Camp and Edward Holloway, who suffered

the last penalty of the law, were not murderers, but burglars, and were hanged (such were the laws in "the good old times") for a burglary committed at Stonebridge Toll-gate House, in the parish of Henley-in-Arden.

Two more men were given over to the hangman in 1837, and were launched into eternity, outside the prison gates as usual. Their names were William Dollman and Nathaniel Hedge, and the crime for which they suffered was the murder of Mr. Pinder, tax-collector, of Birmingham.

In 1845, the atrocious murderer, James Cowley, underwent the extreme penalty for taking the life of Mr. Tilsley, his father's manservant. This was a very mysterious case, as the crime was committed in December, 1842, and the murderer was not brought to justice till 1845! The story of this murder, and the lengthened escape of Cowley, who was a physically fine young fellow of 29 years of age, is one of the most absorbing in criminal annals.

We believe the last execution which took place outside the gates of the Old Warwick Prison was that of Kington, who was hanged there in 1859.

So early as the year 1845, proposals had been made by the county justices for enlarged prison accommodation—although the old Bridewell could conveniently hold 728 prisoners—and for seventeen weary years the agitation was kept afloat, owing to a great opposition having set in towards a new gaol. We are glad to relate that Lord Leigh was one of the promoters and heartiest supporters of the new Prison scheme, which began to assume tangible proportions in 1860, by the erection of the existing prison at "The Cape."

Though so many years have passed, whenever we walk by the Old Warwick Prison a kind of shudder runs through our veins; for we seem to see the gaunt gibbet staring out in the murk, and to hear the muffled roar of the mob around, as the prisoner appears, marching silently to his ignominious doom.

# **Shakespeare Worship in Warwickshire:**

**A SKETCH OF BIRTHDAY FESTIVALS.**



## Shakespeare Worship in Warwickshire:

### A SKETCH OF BIRTHDAY FESTIVALS.

**S**INCE Garrick—more, perhaps, for a “bold advertisement” for himself than for any absorbing desire to honour the memory of Shakespeare—held his Jubilee Pageant at the poet's birthplace, in 1769, it had been the custom each year, until about two decades ago, to hold, in the Town Hall, on Shakespeare's birthday, what Leigh Hunt was pleased to call “the regular feast.”

The last of these “regular feasts” was held on the 23rd of April, 1879, at the opening of the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. The chairman upon that occasion was the late Mr. Charles Edgar Flower, the then Mayor of the classic town, who signalled his devotion to Shakespeare by contributing the munificent sum of £22,700 to the Memorial largely augmented since; and the toast of “The Immortal Memory of Shakespeare” was proposed in most eloquent language by Robert Hall Baynes, formerly Vicar of St. Michael's, Coventry, and Humana Canon of Worcester Cathedral, whose death at Oxford by burning, in March, 1895, brought a sad ending to a life at one time full of great promise.

It was, from many points of view, a remarkable festival, because, apart from the presence of the highest authorities all interested in Shakespeare, and the opportunity of seeing well-known representatives of the stage and the press, it was a



Theodore Martin—the Helen Faucit of Macready's days—taking the parts of *Beatrice* and *Benedict* in “Much Ado About Nothing.” The late Dr. Westland Marston, poet and dramatist, also wrote a very graceful Shakespeare eulogy for the occasion.

Long before the commencement of the Victorian era, it had been the rule to lay “Mine Host of the Falcon,” or “The Red Lion,” under contribution, for the purpose of furnishing a good feast to the poet's admirers, many of whom, although absorbed in the occupation of farming, had a wide acquaintance with Shakespeare's works, and a glib tongue to sing his praises.

To turn back the page of Shakesperean lore only so far as the April of 1829, we find that great actor, Edmund Kean—in whom the third Marquis of Hertford took so great an interest—was announced to be present at the birthday festival. Upon this occasion, Mr. Evelyn Philip Shirley, of Ettington Park (a Shakespeare scholar and a Warwickshire gentleman of great learning), introduced a blind harper whom he had brought from his Irish estates; and this relic of the ancient troubadours delighted the company with the touching airs of his native land. Then, in turn, our own countryman charmed the ear of the Irish harper with the merry strains of “The Warwickshire Lads and Lasses.”

In emulation of the pageant introduced by Garrick in 1769, the Shakespeare Club at Stratford-on-Avon—which was established in 1824, and was allowed, in 1833, by special permission of George the Fourth, to use the prefix of “Royal” to its title—sometimes added a masquerade to the other attractions of the birthday festival.

There was such a “Shakespearean Masque” held in 1833, no doubt to signalise the royal condescension of King George, at which there were 250 persons present, dressed in the various characters depicted by Shakespeare. Such a “crowd,” all habited in the motley garb, must certainly have had rather a jarring effect



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upon the real student of the poet, who could scarcely conceive this to be a fit and proper method of honouring the immortal dead; and its very tawdry and show-like aspect was really its death warrant; for although, upon one or two occasions subsequently, masquerades were still held, the event was never in any sense a popular one, and, besides, was out of keeping with the written tastes of Shakespeare.

In the "thirties," there was a splendid galaxy of literary lights—such men as Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, Charles Lamb, Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, Leigh Hunt, William Wordsworth, Walter Savage Landor, J. Payne Collier, Cowden Clarke, Serjeant Talfourd, Samuel Lover, Thomas de Quincey, William Howitt, and J. Halliwell Phillipps; and the Shakesperean records of the time show that many of them personally visited the classic town to pay homage at the shrine of "Stratford's wondrous son."

At the festival of 1837, the chief guest was James Sheridan Knowles, actor, and the author of "Virginius" and "The Hunchback," who took up his residence in Leamington for some time, and derived great benefit from the mineral waters. He gave a graceful tribute to the poet in the form of a "Shakespeare Oration," in the course of which he said that "the genius of Shakespeare was above man's comprehension"—an opinion which, in spite of Mr. Donnelly and the Bacon Society, many will be found to agree with at the present time.

The festival of 1845 was noted for the presence of Samuel Lover, the Irish wit, poet, and novelist, and author of "Rory O'More," who proposed the toast of "Sheridan Knowles and the Drama," and in doing so took occasion to make his speech accord, as much as possible, with the object of the meeting.

A classical tone was given to the commemoration of 1847, through a letter being read which had been sent by the poet Wordsworth to Mr. Chandos Wren Hoskyns, of Wroxhall Abbey.

In this, Wordsworth regretted his absence from the festival, and suggested that the Shakespeare Commemorations should be triennial instead of annual, as the frequent repetition would cause them to become stale and lose their spirit. Time soon began to confirm Wordsworth's opinion; and in this age "the regular feast," advocated so strongly by Leigh Hunt, is a thing unknown at Stratford-on-Avon as the chief item in the programme of Shakespeare's birthday.

One especially good festival was that held in 1848, when the late Earl of Warwick—then Lord Brooke—was in the chair. The principal guest was that very talented Shakespeare commentator, James Payne Collier. He was called upon to propose the toast of "The Drama," and in doing so made use of the remark that "those who say that Shakespeare created the drama are doing an injustice to Shakespeare's predecessors; but he may be said to have remodeled, to have improved it, and raised it to a pitch it never before attained."

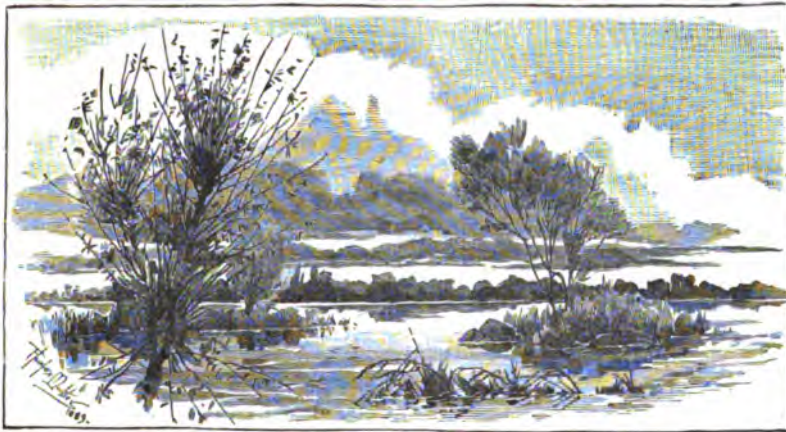
At this festival, the "Shakespeare goblet" made out of the wood of the celebrated mulberry tree, and given to Garrick in 1769 by the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon, was exhibited, along with the poet's baptismal and death registers.

Not only in Stratford-on-Avon has the poet's birthday been commemorated. At Aston Hall, Birmingham, in 1859, no less than 250 people sat down to a dinner furnished in the great gallery, and presided over by Mr. William Schofield, M.P., to do honour to Shakespeare's memory; and the function is kept up, to some extent, to-day in what Edmund Burke called "The Toyshop of Europe."

But "the regular feast" at Stratford-on-Avon has disappeared, and along with it much of the old-fashioned, honest enthusiasm which contributed to make the festivals of fifty years, and even of twenty years, ago so successful and enjoyable.

The people's love for Shakespeare cannot have grown less

though it manifests itself in a different and, it may be, in a more quiescent method to that adopted by our forefathers. It is, however, a moot question whether a revival of the erstwhile dinner at Stratford-on-Avon to the memory of the immortal bard, would not bring benefit in a variety of ways.





# **My Landlady at Little Compton:**

**A RURAL SKETCH.**





## My Landlady at Little Compton:

### A RURAL SKETCH.

**N**OT your bold, barefaced, vulgar, ill-bred, syren-harpy sort of creature, with which modern literature and modern civilisation have made the world familiar. Not that something less or more than a woman, who stands in the hall like a cast-iron door porter, and fixes a cold stare upon the lodger whenever that luckless wight comes in or goes out.

Not that human Gorgon who has a capacity for figures, and puts up the price of beef steak, mutton chops, and other edibles, until it almost takes a team of horses to draw the purse from the lodger's pocket on settling day! Not that desultory house-keeper who puts ill-aired sheets on the bed, and leaves the mirror and chairs undusted.

No; my landlady, whom I am about to limn with a feeble pen, is not of the general kind. Her dear old face—(yes, I am compelled to use the word “old,” albeit it has been written, and not without truth either, that no one is old but “Old Harry,” and he is thousands of years old)—though like a quilted counterpane with wrinkles, would not Gorgonise a living creature.

Her face was to me, as the poet says, “divinely fair;” not from any particular beauty which it had, and may have had when it was young—though, when contemplating it, I could well imagine that, when in its spring, with the demure, coy sunshine lighting it up, there was something about it that was very attractive—but because of the unmistakable touches of

kindness, which are charms quite above all powers of beauty, that illuminated it whenever I, or anyone else, looked upon it. There are some faces that make the flesh creep when they are wrinkled, but the face of my landlady was not one of those.

Ah! no; the face of Miriam Winter, though as wrinkled and ribbed as the stubble-field in front of her little cottage, was a face that reflected every kind thought and every kind action of which the human creature is capable.

Surely it was one of the dear old Penates that led me to "the dab and wattle" cot of comfortable Dame Winter.

My doctor—may that doctor never while he lives be any more worried to death by cold-hearted landladies—had insisted upon my going from home, and ceasing to "burn the candle at both ends," as he called it. He suggested that I should go, not to the seaside, as the end of September had come, but to some quiet little homestead in the country, where I could make friends with the birds, the fishes, the sheep, the cows, and the chubby-cheeked children; where I could listen all the livelong day to the euphonious boom of the threshing machine, and all the dreary night to the sighing of the perry pear tree and the rattling of the loose window frame.

So, in accordance with the doctorial ukase, I went into Mid-Warwickshire—not a thousand miles from the Shepperton and the Hall Farm of George Eliot—and, at the south-west corner of a square where four lanes met, I encountered the wrinkled, kind face of Miriam Winter, leaning over a gate, absorbed in the admiration of a fine flock of geese being fed on the neighbouring farm-land of Mr. James Thornett, a well-known agriculturist.

Hunt Cottage was the name of Mrs. Winter's habitation. It was one of the oldest cottages in Little Compton, and Little Compton was known all through the shire as a nursery of a high standing for foxes.

Mrs. Winter had not without reason had her abode named Hunt Cottage, for at the cross roads where she lived, the hounds were in the constant habit of meeting, and at these times my dear old landlady (as she told me when I was her lodger) "used to make a good bit out of foot-passengers, who liked a glass o' perry and a home-made macaroon," and I can quite understand their partiality for the perry and macaroons of Hunt Cottage, for during my sojourn there I tried both kinds, and they seemed to me of a superior kind though, not having a long acquaintance with perry or macaroons, I may not be a very good judge of their merits or demerits.

It is pleasant to be waited and watched for. Ah! those only know how pleasant who are in delicate health and are not over-burdened with friends; and it was to me a pleasure, not far removed from a blessing, to know that Miriam Water, with her head hanging over the garden gate of Hunt Cottage, was watching and waiting for me.

She had never seen me in her life before, but she "knew I was the gentleman," she said, as Mr. Wilson, from Little Compton Rectory, had sent her word that a gentleman was coming, and begged her to look after him "as if he was her own son;" and, she added, "you *are* my son now, you know, and must do just as I tell you to, or else I shall be cross; and oh! you don't know how cross I can be if I try."

And then Miriam laughed, and that wrinkled face of hers became as puckered up as the gathers of a lady's dress when it has been done by a careless worker.

So I was immured in Hunt Cottage towards the close of a beautiful September day; strictly enjoined by my doctor, on pain of losing him as my medical adviser, to abstain from all manner of work, and to take my ease as though I were an innkeeper or a millionaire.

The outside of my new abode was, at the time of my

accession to the inside, just at its overblown summer beauty. In front of the cottage there was a neatly-clipped box hedge, whose primeval greenness had changed to a lovely russet hue. There was a walk up to the door of ancient kidney stones; and round the door a white rose tree clustered, whose blossoms, prescient of their fate, looked as melancholy as a day in winter when the sun has refused to shine.

Springing from a mound on the inside of the box hedge was a pear tree—a tree evidently too proud to be confined to the humble garden of Hunt Cottage, for its topmost branches were peering over the house roof. This was the perry pear tree, the fruit of which was as hard as iron, from which Mrs. Winter made that sparkling perry which she sold to the foot-passengers who came to the cottage to see the hounds “throw off.”

A large bundle of sticks, gathered for the winter fires, was stacked by the hedge on the east side; and on the west side, a narrow pathway of kidney stones wound round by the water butt, and onward to the back of the house.

“Ah! sir,” said my good Job’s comforter, as she led me into the cosiest of little parlours and closed the door, thereby shutting out the last streak of the day’s sun; “Ah, sir, you *have* come to an old country cottage this time, and an old country ‘ooman too, an’ no mistake. But you’ll be comfortable, sir, I hope; and if everything ain’t to your liking, will you be pleased to say so, sir, and I’ll try to rectify it.”

Everything to my liking, indeed! Why, nothing could be more pleasant to an invalid, or a robust man, than my quarters were at Hunt Cottage, Little Compton. As I looked down upon the tea that Mrs. Winter had brought in and set so carefully upon the two-leaved table, I thought I was once more in my own home, with my own dear mother attending to my wants.

My landlady had reached out her best Wedgwood ware—oh! such small buff-coloured pieces, with rather bold flowers painted upon them—and her most cherished silver; silver that had been given to her mother upon her bridal day, and which had the family initials engraven upon it. On a wee dish in the centre of the tray lay a beautifully-cooked mutton chop, which the dear old creature's forethought had provided.

"When people's come on a journey, sir," she said, "it often 'appens as they are hungry. I thought perhaps you might feel in that way, sir; and the air o' Compton do sharpen the appetite, I've heard say."

Oh! that chop; I shall never forget it. Whether it was that my journey "across country" *had* sharpened my appetite, or that Miriam Winter knew the secret of cooking,—a secret that few housekeepers and wives of to-day seem to know anything about—the fact still remains that that chop was the sweetest and juciest I have ever eaten. Surely the ovides of Little Compton are the tenderest in the world; and I think it would be well for the digestions of poor humanity if the breed were cultivated in other pastures.

If the day was charming in my little front parlour at Hunt Cottage—and it certainly was—the night was more cosy. The sun, in the daytime, would glint through the small window-panes over the leaves of the potted plants that stood upon the window-board. At night, the bright fire, which Miriam Winter insisted upon lighting, would throw the toy-box of a room into a warm, red glow, that melted all frostiness, and made the small, withered old lady, whom I liked to come and sit with me sometimes, feel once more the return of youth in her veins.

In the daytime, I could look through the window when the air was "too chilly" to go out, and see the Christmas rose just peeping above the earth, or watch the newly-arrived robin, with scarlet breast, nodding, ducking, and twittering on a naked

stalk of the lavender bush. At night, when the lamp was lit, I could reach down "Blair's Sermons" or the poems of George Herbert, and amuse myself with reading those exquisite works.

Mrs. Miriam Winter's bookshelf contained a strange mass of ancient and modern literature. Next to a battered copy of "Adam Bede"—(which my landlady, who was turned seventy years of age, could see to read, and was fond of reading, because, as she said, "You know, sir, I seed Marian Evans once; she come and hanged over my garden gate, and said, 'Oh! my good 'ooman, what a pretty garden you have got'" )—was an abridgment of Goldsmith's "History of England," printed in 1800, and "embellished" with a collection of curious "heads of the kings"—a book which Mrs. Winter had evidently studied with profit, as I discovered she had an acquaintance with events in English history of which I was almost, if not entirely, ignorant.

There was also a copy of Currer Bell's novel, "Jane Eyre," which Mrs. Winter informed me she very seldom looked at, as there was "a mad 'ooman" in it, and she didn't like "them creepy things."

Curiously enough, my landlady, who was rather frightened to *read* of a mad woman, was not at all frightened to breathe the same air with ghosts.

Little Compton Church stood in the rear of Hunt Cottage, and some twenty years ago a young curate who was in charge hanged himself in the turret with the bell-rope. He was said to walk in the graveyard at night; but his ghost had no terrors for Miriam Winter. The old lady would walk down her back garden, which was only divided from the graveyard by a low thorn hedge, when the moonlight was whitest, and gather her clothes and linen off the hedge without the slightest fear.

"Not afraid of seeing the ghost, Mrs. Winter?" I said to her one evening, when she had just come in with an armful of washing as white as driven snow.

"Lor! bless you, no, sir," she said, laughing her face into puckers again. "I should like to see poor Mr. Drane again. He would have been here now, sir, if it had not been for pretty Mrs. Brandon up at the Grange, sir."

"How was that, Mrs. Winter?" I asked; and the good lady deposited her white clothes on the old bureau, and sat down to relate to me the following painful tale:—

"Mrs. Brandon, sir, afore she was married to Captain Brandon, was Miss Fielding. 'Birdie' they used to call her, because she was so pretty, and had such a beautiful voice. She used to lead the choir, sir; and with her pretty ruffles round her neck, as I used to get up for her—when I was younger, you see, I used to take in washing and do ironing—she certainly did look as pretty a lassie as ever I seed. Mr. Drane, too, were a nice young gentleman—like yourself, sir—with light hair and blue eyes.

"Him and 'Birdie,' were allus together; and I could see, if nobody else could—'cause the curate lived here when poor mother were alive—that he were dying of love for her. But Mr. Drane was poor, and 'Birdie' wasn't the kind o' 'ooman to get mated to a poor man. She had been what they called 'the grand tour,' and wanted dresses and all that finery."

"And so she refused Mr. Drane?" I said.

"Yes, she did, sir; and what was worse, sir, she made him promise as how he'd marry 'em. That broke his heart, that did. On the night afore the marriage, he sat in this very room, sir, and cried like a child, sir, for hours."

"Did he marry 'Birdie,' after all, Mrs. Winter?"

"Oh! yes, sir. He was up early the next morning, and was as cheerful as a thrush. He married 'Birdie' to Captain Brandon with a smile on his face; and then, as our custom is in villages, sir, he asked permission to kiss the bride. Nobody could ever 'ave imagined by his looks, sir, as he were



feeling it so sharp. He kissed 'Birdie' as lovin' as if he had been her own brother; and that were the last kiss as he ever had on this earth.

"Late that night, sir, as he never come 'ome, my father—who was alive then, and were parish clerk o' St. Peter's Church—went down and looked all over the place; and there they foun' him, sir, hangin' stone dead in the belfry."

"Poor fellow," I said. "I suppose the church was consecrated again after the sad event, Mrs. Winter?"

"No, it weren't, sir," rejoined my landlady. "It were shut up for three years, till after the affair was forgot a little. Mrs. Brandon went away for six years to foreign parts; but I don't think she felt his death very much. Them ladies as go the grand tour don't seem to care much about anything only their-selves."

And with this homely, but just sentiment, Mrs. Winter put away her white clothes and brought me in a tapioca pudding.

I remained in the little parlour of Hunt Cottage, Little Compton, during some of the happiest days of my life. My landlady was as watchful over me as if I had really been her own son. My puddings were always flavoured with the aromatic bay-leaf; my days with sunshine; and my nights with the talk of a dear old creature who, like Mrs. Poyser, would have her say out.

Miriam Winter is the type of provincial rural character that is dying out with the introduction into villages of gas and stucco. That type of landlady is no more like the town harpy than "chalk is like cheese." She is a living milestone that points the way to the past; and, surely, there is no better milestone for a wearied and worn sinner to reach than one such as my landlady.

# ***A Warwickshire Worthy :***

**DR. SAMUEL PARR, LL.D.**



## A Warwickshire Worthby:

DR. SAMUEL PARR, LL.D.

**E**AFY Warwickshire has cause to be proud of claiming a connection with so eminent a scholar as Dr. Samuel Parr. Talents like his are not so common that they can be dismissed in a line, or passed over without notice. He was, indeed, a man of very superior learning, in times when a classical education was more prized and more necessary than in these days.

His connection with Mid-Warwickshire began in 1783, when he was thirty-six years of age. At that date he was instituted to the perpetual curacy of Hatton, a little village on the west side of Warwick; a post so congenial to his own tastes, and which he suited so well, that he retained it until his death, in 1825—a period of forty-two years.

Those were “the good old days, the grand old days” of Church abuse, previous to the passing of “The Clergy Residence Act,” when ministers were able to hold two or three livings at one and the same time; and, although Dr. Parr was no exception to the general rule of clergymen who followed this reprehensible custom, he was so acclimatised to Warwickshire, that he continued always to live in his neat little parsonage house at Hatton.

During his residence there, Dr. Parr made the acquaintance of many notable literary characters. Amongst his near neighbours were Walter Savage Landor, and Chandos Leigh (father of

the present Lord Leigh, and first Baron under the revived title of 1839).

With these, both of whom were eminent for their literary tastes, Dr. Parr was on terms of close intimacy. His rough and rugged manner—which was only the crust of a warm, gentle, and honest nature—was so akin to Landor's own, that the two became earnest and devoted friends; the elder giving the younger good counsel, and the younger brightening the years of the elder with the energy and ambition of a youthful and robust personality.

Dr. Parr, indeed, was warmly attached to his young friend, Landor. In introducing him to a literary acquaintance, he wrote :—

“He is impetuous, open-hearted, magnanimous; largely furnished with general knowledge, well versed in the best of classical writers; a man of original genius, as appears in his compositions, both in prose and verse; a keen hater of oppression and corruption, and a steady friend to civil and religious liberty. I am confident you will be much interested by his conversation, and it is my good fortune to know that his talents and attainments amply atone for his singularities.”

Even Landor, stern and unrelenting cynic as he was, could not have found fault with so kind and generous a criticism. It was only one of the kindly actions that Dr. Parr took pleasure in performing; and the subject of his recommendation took special care to remember the friendship shown to him by

“Great Parr, the Nestor of his age.”

Almost universal kindness, however, is not a safeguard against violent and partisan attacks. When Dr. Parr, in a few years after his assumption of the living of Hatton, laid his critical and perfectly Ciceronian writings aside, and penned a vigorous

political impeachment of the opponents of the Whig Party, to which he belonged, he unfortunately made enemies in certain quarters, and destroyed his hopes of ecclesiastical preferment. There is but little doubt that, but for his criticism, Dr. Parr would have obtained a bishopric—an office for which his splendid abilities admirably fitted him.

A man so well known, and so daring in his utterances, could not long hope to escape from the snare into which his convictions had beguiled him. During the memorable Birmingham Riots of 1791—the precursors to the Chartist Riots of 1839—Dr. Parr, owing partly to his principles and his friendship with Dr. Priestley, was singled out as a fair object of attack.

At this time, he had a magnificent library of classical works in his parsonage house at Hatton; and to destroy this was the object of the mob. Fortunately, Dr. Parr and his friends were beforehand with the rioters. The books were removed from the parsonage, and were ultimately preserved.

Though it is as a classical scholar that Dr. Parr stands out so superior to many men of his time, he was not devoid of those social, humane, and domestic qualities which give character and nobility to mankind. In the social circle, he was highly esteemed and very popular, especially so when he was among those with whom he could throw off his natural reserve.

It is in the character of a "Society man," if the term may be applied to a person of so much culture and erudition, that Dr. Parr formed so close a connection with Leamington. As a relief to his studies, this learned divine, a faithful and earnest worker and upholder of the Established Church, sought the lighter pleasures then to be found at Leamington Priors, amid a select and well-informed company of visitors, attracted thither by the fame of the waters, which had been trumpeted to the world by William Abbots, Benjamin Satchwell, and James Bisset.

The latter has placed it on record that the scholarly cleric from Holy Trinity Church, at Hatton, took especial and particular delight in leading off the country dance, before the "Bowling Green Inn" (then in Church Street), with the beautiful Duchess of Bedford, and other grand dames, who were at that time visitors to the royal town.

Dr. Parr was as noted for his humanity as he was for his erudition and sociability. His parishioners, and those who lived in the neighbourhood for miles round, were recipients of his bounty. No deserving appeal ever made to him was rejected. More than this, he was so humane as to wish to see capital punishment abolished, except for the worst of crimes—murder. Had he lived in this enlightened age, he would have rejoiced to find the death penalty for stealing, forgery, and other minor offences swept off the Statute Book.

In pursuance of his humane principles, he was once so fortunate as to save a culprit from the gallows. This kindly act he never afterwards regretted, for the person whose life he had been the means of sparing became a reformed and useful member of society.

The domestic qualities of Dr. Parr were of that agreeable and harmless kind peculiar to country parsons of the old school. Like his contemporary, Richard Jago, Vicar of Snitterfield, and poet of "Edge Hill," Dr. Parr was fond of gardening, and was often to be seen with spade and rake in his little parsonage garden at Hatton. No doubt both Jago and Parr acquired this cultivated taste from William Shenstone, the poet of the Lease-owes—a property upon the borders of Warwickshire.

Besides the relief given to his studious mind by the pursuit of ornamental gardening, Dr. Parr was also a learned campanologist.

While at school at Harrow, his fondness for weighing and ringing the bells was considered to be one of his eccentricities;

but it was a taste or eccentricity that followed him into later life, and he was rarely so happy as when he was ringing his favourite bells in the tower of Hatton Church. He is stated to have known the tone and weight of every great bell in England at that time.

Writing to a friend about a new peal of bells which he had obtained for his church, he said :—

“My peal of bells is come. It cost a great sum of money, and I take the liberty of requesting you to forward the contribution which you promised me. I believe that my Norwich friends would have honoured me as a country parson if they had seen the harmless but animated festivity of my village on Friday last.

“The great bell has inscribed upon it the name of ‘Paul,’ and is now lying upon our green. It holds more than 73 gallons. It was filled with good ale, and was emptied too, on Friday last. More than 300 of my parishioners, young and old, rich and poor, assembled, and their joy was beyond description. I gave some rum to the farmers’ wives, and some vidonia and elder wine to their daughters; and the lads and lasses had a merry dance in the schoolroom.

“Now, as the Apostle Paul preached a famous sermon at Athens, I thought it right that his namesake should also preach at Hatton, and the sermon was divided into the following heads :—‘May it be late before the great bell tolls for a funeral knell, even for the oldest here present!’ ‘May the whole peal ring often and merrily for the unmarried!’ ‘May the lads make haste to get wives, and the lasses to get husbands, and hear the marriage bell.’”

With his friend, Henry Homer (of Birdingbury, near Rugby), Dr. Parr maintained a life-long intimacy. Both were learned literary men, and both worked together upon an edition of Bellenden’s works, the elegant preface of which was written



by Dr. Parr, and inscribed to Charles James Fox, Edmund Burke, and Lord North—three of his most steadfast patrons.

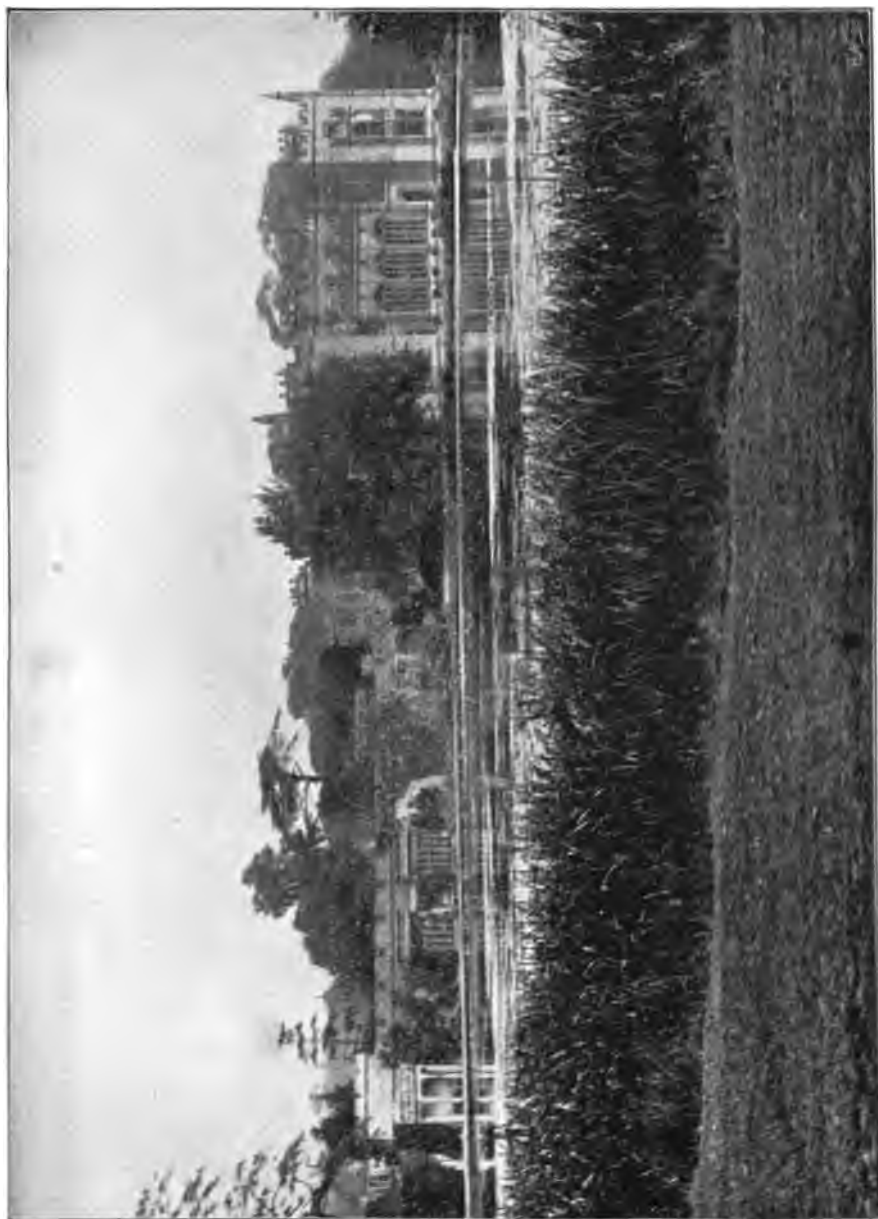
This, then, was the man whose great learning and many good qualities have done lasting honour to Warwickshire ; to the shire with which he was so long connected, and in the soil of which he sleeps in peace to-day.



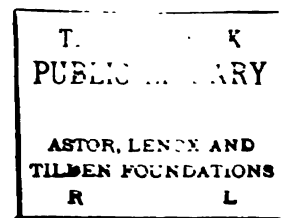
# The "Cheverel Manor" of George Eliot:

A RURAL SKETCH.





ARBURY HALL, NEAR NUNEATON



## The "Cheverel Manor" of George Eliot:

### A RURAL SKETCH.

THE almost forsaken grave of George Eliot in Highgate Cemetery, revives, and in some cases creates an interest in the scenes depicted in that great writer's earlier novels.

Of the numbers who read her vigorously-drawn "Scenes of Clerical Life," how few are acquainted with the fact that Arbury Hall, near Nuneaton, is the "Cheverel Manor" where the *Reverend Mr. Gilfil* made love to the luckless *Caterina*; that the quaint old-world little village of Chilvers Coten is the "Shepperton" in which the *Reverend Amos Barton* so bravely fought the battle of life on eighty pounds a year, for himself, his wife, and his children; or that The Hall at Corley, an adjacent village, is "The Hall Farm" of "Adam Bede," from which the pretty, wayward *Hetty Sorrel* fled, when she could no longer remain there with credit to churn the butter and gather the currants.

Surely it is one of the greatest of charms to be able to identify the scenes and characters depicted by so thoroughly an English novelist as George Eliot.

She was no purveyor of feeble literature. The literary meat she served up for the digestion of fiction readers, during a period of twenty years, was of the very finest English growth—raised on the luxuriant pastures of "Leafy Warwickshire," and brought to an appreciative English market. Besides being a novelist, George Eliot was also a graphic painter of rustic

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scenery—a scenic artist of great culture, who left few variations of Nature untouched.

In “Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story”—the second of her “Scenes of Clerical Life”—George Eliot draws a vivid picture of “Cheverel Manor,” or, by its right name, Arbury Hall. Many a gentle piscator who obtains leave to fish in the waters which, moat-like, surround this venerable mansion, recognises in the castellated dull-tinted block of masonry, with its fine mullioned windows, the manor where *Captain Wybrow* played with the sensitive little heart of meek-eyed, demure *Tina*.

There is the great giant beech, leaning athwart one of the sturdy flanking towers; there the broad gravel path on which the novelist, who in the future was to be known as George Eliot, often walked; there the row of tall pines alongside the pools, kept in such perfect order by Robert Evans, land steward to Sir Roger Newdigate, and father of George Eliot; there the swan-gemmed lake, adorned with rich and variegated foliage; and there the silver brooklet, dashing its mimic torrents through the rude masses of red sandstone, adding a fairy touch to a scene perfectly English and perfectly lovable.

Little *Tina* might still be sauntering by the lily-decked pools, or waiting in one of the picturesque arbours, for the fortunate lover who comes not. All is so vividly identical with the scenes of the book, that one can almost pick out the glade where *Captain Wybrow’s* heart ceased to beat, and where puling *Caterina* found him stretched on the grass, never to speak to her again.

“Cheverel Manor” stands upon the site of Erdbury Priory—an hospice that belonged to St. Augustine’s Order of Monks. Sir William Dugdale, the Warwickshire historian, mentions the fact that the Priory, after the Dissolution, was left to decay until the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the building came into the possession of Sir Edmund Anderson, Chief Justice of the

Common Pleas, who pulled down the old house, and erected "a fair quadrangular structure" upon the site.

As soon as the house was finished, however, the great lawyer seems to have conceived a dislike for it, and, accordingly, exchanged the domain at Arbury for the Manor and lands of Harefield, in Middlesex, which had been the ancestral home of the Newdegates since the reign of Edward the Third.

Thus the ancient estates of Arbury, in one of the most distinctly Warwickshire of all Warwickshire scenes, became the family seat of the Newdegates; who, at this epoch, substituted an *i* for an *e* in their patronymic, and speedily occupied a high position in the county of Warwick.

In 1734, Sir Roger Newdigate, who is identical with the Gothic-loving baronet of "Cheverel Manor," came into ownership of the estate. This baronet was obviously a man of culture. He had made "the grand tour," and at the age of twenty-one was elected Member of Parliament for Middlesex.

That political position was held by Sir Roger for six years, and was resigned to enable him to represent the University of Oxford, which had conferred upon him its highest honours. For thirty years he enjoyed the Parliamentary favour of the University, during which time he performed the functions of an amateur architect at Arbury Hall.

"Cheverel Manor" was entirely remodeled and rebuilt from his own designs and under his own watchful eye—Italianised by a long, critical survey of foreign architecture—and is in the same state now as in 1806, when Sir Roger Newdigate died. George Eliot, who was born in 1819—thirteen years after the death of Sir Roger—must have acquired her information regarding the rebuilding of "Cheverel Manor" from her father or the old family retainers.

In 1734, the mansion erected by Sir Edmund Anderson had piles of chimneys projecting from each front of the quadrangle,



and the whole edifice vastly offended the cultivated taste of Sir Roger Newdigate. In his design, the titled architect embodied all the enrichments of Perpendicular Gothic at its most ornate period.

The uncouth chambers were hidden by massive turrets. All the outer walls were cased with stone. The colossal courtyard was environed by a cloister—a name which, doubtless, sounded as a kind of insult to the stern and unbending Protestantism of the late Charles Newdigate Newdigate, for many years Member of Parliament for the Northern Division of Warwickshire. The bare brick walls of the garden that skirted the quiet pools were, by the cunning contrivances of the baronet, recessed in arches and joined to the house.

On the grassy mounds beyond the towering pines, artificial altars were placed; and on the north side a long vista was opened in the woodlands—a vista that terminated at an embattled gateway. Both inside and out, Sir Roger made an entire change in the aspect of Arbury Hall.

If, outside, the house is suggestive of “Cheverel Manor,” the inside is more reminiscent.

The dining room of George Eliot's day was “so bare of furniture that it impressed one with its architectural beauty like a cathedral;” and when Charles N. Newdigate was in the flesh, that cathedral-like beauty was still preserved as a sort of kindly memorial of the great novelist, who has, to a certain extent, made the dwelling immortal.

As George Eliot says: “The slight matting and sideboard, in a recess, did not detain the eye for a moment from the lofty groined ceiling, with its richly-carved pendants, all of creamy white, relieved here and there by touches of gold.

“On one side this lofty ceiling was supported by pillars and arches, beyond which a lower ceiling, a miniature copy of the higher one, covered the square protection, which, with its

three pointed windows, formed the central feature of the building. The room looked less like a place to dine in than a piece of space enclosed simply for the sake of beautiful outline; and the small dining table seemed a small and insignificant accident, rather than anything connected with the original purpose of the apartment."

Many long years have passed since "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" was told, and but little change has taken place in the aspect of this room. It speaks in eloquent silence of George Eliot and her famous pen. The library, too, with its array of books, well-laden tables, and ponderous ceiling, suggests the study in that Florentine home where pretty *Romola* and fleeting, perjured *Tito* worked together at the classification of poor *Bardo's* library.

It is the long gallery, however, flooded with "dim religious light," that conjures up the "Cheverel Manor" before the vision in all its life-like vividness.

Covered with the film of Time stand the cabinets, cases, pictures, weapons, and other articles of bric-a-brac of which *Caterina* was so interested an observer. Standing in this precious lumber-room, where classification seems to have been begun and abandoned, one can almost see the overwrought *Tina* snatching up the glittering dagger with which, in her rage, she would have killed *Captain Wybrow*.

"Cheverel Manor," in most respects, is still the same as in the days of Marian Evans—dim, picturesque, and romantic. It is one of the most spoken-of mansions in "Leafy Warwickshire," and yet, practically, it is one of the least-known places of interest. Lovers of George Eliot—and their name is legion, for her vigorous English and masterful study of character have rooted themselves deeply in the reading mind—should, when they go to Warwickshire, never fail to make a call at "Cheverel Manor," otherwise Arbury Hall, near Nuneaton.

It may be of interest to state here that on the east wall of the south aisle of Chilvers Coten Church (the "Shepperton" of George Eliot) is the following memorial tablet:—"Sacred to the memory of Bernard Gilpin Ebdell, B.A.; Forty years resident vicar of this parish; He died August 6th, 1828, aged 66 years; also of Sarah, wife of Bernard Gilpin Ebdell. She died Nov. 21st, 1823, aged 49 years." These are the originals of *Mr. Gilfil* and *Caterina*.

The original of *Caterina* was Sally Shilton, a collier's daughter. She possessed a beautiful voice, which brought her under the notice of Lady Newdigate, Sir Roger's second wife, who had it cultivated. Sally Shilton was brought up at Arbury Hall, and married the Rev. Mr. Ebdell in 1801.



# In the Footsteps of Hawthorne:

A RURAL SKETCH.





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## In the Footsteps of Hawthorne:

### A RURAL SKETCH.

**T**HERE are not many workers in the literary bee-hive who keep, or like to keep, so close to the hive as Dr. Johnson did. He loved Fleet Street more than a country field; and the wonder is whence he got his literary honey—sticking, as he did, to the grime, and smoke, and brick of a colossal city.

But the fine old savage, in his tramp from Lichfield to London, with his friend, Davy Garrick, doubtless gathered enough country honey to last him his lifetime; and London, in his day and generation, was not quite the bricked-in prison that it now appears.

Like the bee, in one sense, he had laid up a goodly store of literary sweets; and when the winter came—the winter of his life—he could draw those cosy shutters, of which Cowper speaks, and pull his chair up nearer the fire, having no need to go out-of-doors for fresh supplies.

But, unlike the bee in another sense, the great lexicographer was rarely on the wing catching the sunbeams as they crept through the little openings in the hawthorn hedge, and gathering honey, so to speak—meditating upon the exquisite beauty of a wild flower.

And yet this same Dr. Johnson, this fine fellow who wrote "The Vanity of Human Wishes," this chronic stay-at-home-in-Fleet-Street, who yet had not even "the homely wit" of

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Shakespeare's "home-keeping youth;" this gentleman actually projected a paper (a literary paper), to which he was the largest contributor, and called it *The Rambler*!

In this love of brick, smoke, and stuffiness, the inside of taverns and clubs, London by daylight and London by lamplight, the great writer of the past was very unlike the writers of the present. Most of them like to be on the wing; to fly to fresh air and country scenes; to turn their backs joyfully upon the frowning walls of a big city—some of them with an inward wish that they might never have to be imprisoned in the dens of the Modern Babylon any more.

During his lifetime, when Nathaniel Hawthorne, as appears in "Our Old Home," was a stranger in a strange land, he loved to shun the piles of brick and stucco, and go, like the poet Gray,

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,

to some quiet and leafy nook of English country. To him there was something more attractive in the works of God than in the works of man.

No doubt that extraordinary line of Cowley's—

God the first garden made, and the first city Cain,

often sprang up in his mind, when, in his pilgrimage through England, he compared the wide and gloriously varied landscapes of Warwickshire—in which county, owing to its associations with Shakespeare, he was especially interested—with the acres upon acres of brick, covered and shrouded with a thick light-proof cloud of smoke.

To him, the lowing of oxen was sweeter than the shriek of the railway whistle and the hiss of the steam engine. The inventions of Cain were, to his gentle mind, contortions of Nature, and he shunned them whenever and wherever he could.

In his tour through Warwickshire, which Drayton in his "Polyolbion" calls

"The heart of England,"

the author of "Our Old Home" stayed so frequently at Leamington, that the little leafy town became a sort of home to him. He says, in the chapter devoted to a description of that now enlarged and flourishing health resort: "In the course of several stays and visits of considerable length, we acquired a home-like feeling towards Leamington, and came back thither again and again, chiefly because we had been there before."

As a wanderer and a wayfarer, Nathaniel Hawthorne was, like Charles Dickens and Lord Lytton, so pleased with the look of that little Mid-English garden town—where his countrymen from the giant cities of the West, when on their pilgrimage to the shrine of Shakespeare, most do congregate—that he pitched his tent there, and, in his own words, "came back thither again and again."

Then he goes on to speak of the place where he resided:—

"There is a small nest of a place at Leamington—at No. 10, Lansdowne Circus—upon which to this day my reminiscences are apt to settle, as one of the cosiest nooks in England, or in the world; not that it had any special charm of its own, but only that we stayed long enough to know it well, and even to grow a little tired of it. In the centre of the Circus is a space fenced in with iron railing—a small play-place and sylvan retreat for the children of the precincts—permeated by brief pathways through the fresh English grass, and shadowed by various shrubbery; amid which, if you like, you may fancy yourself in a deep seclusion, though probably the mark of eye-shot from the windows of all the surrounding houses."

That is the cosy "nest of a place" in which Hawthorne,

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one of America's illustrious sons, lived, and where, doubtless, he laid the foundations of some of his exquisite writings.

On the morning upon which I penned this imperfect sketch, I visited the clean little circus of houses just off the Holly Walk (of which venerable avenue of trees Dickens has given a dainty monograph in "*Dombey and Son*"), in which Hawthorne found peace and pleasure in 1855. Everything within that ring of brick is the same now as when the author of "*The House with the Seven Gables*" sojourned there.

Nothing is changed. The play-place in the middle is just as green, pretty, and secluded, and girt with the self-same iron railing, as in the days when Hawthorne went inside to be shaded from the sun. There is the house, too, in which, to judge from his own words, he spent so many pleasant hours—No. 10. It seems to me to have a larger or a brighter number than the other doors have; and as I stand gazing upon that door, I can, in imagination, see it opened, and behold the writer of "*Twice Told Tales*" coming down the little garden path.

One of his favourite walks, while a sojourner at Leamington, was to the neighbouring village of Lillington. What the village was in Hawthorne's days that it is to-day.

"The village," he says, "consists chiefly of one row of contiguous dwellings, separated only by party-walls, but ill-matched among themselves, being of different heights, and apparently of different ages, though all are of an antiquity which we should call venerable."

It is simply a marvel how slowly life moves in some of the sequestered village nooks of Mid-England. Yet, who could wish it to move quicker? Here, in the very heart of "*Leafy Warwickshire*"—and on the road to Lillington there is an old oak planted upon the site of the middle of England—is a village upon the face of which time and civilisation have worked but few changes.

To be sure, there has been another village school erected there since Hawthorne sat upon the stile of the footway that connects Lillington with Leamington, but in other respects the village is the same; and any stranger reading Hawthorne's description of it would recognise the village at once, were he to pass up that long road that leads to Weston and "The Sign of the Bull"—a noted fox-hunting meeting house.

Even Time, the lordly destroyer, has only been able to fix his iron tooth upon three of the old cottages with which Hawthorne was so charmed when he saw them. Speaking of them in his happily chosen words, he says:—

"I never saw a prettier rural scene than was presented by this range of contiguous huts; for in front of the whole row was a luxuriant and well-trimmed hawthorn hedge, and belonging to each cottage was a little square of garden ground, separated from its neighbours by a line of the same verdant fence. The gardens were chock full, not of esculent vegetables, but of flowers—familiar ones, but very bright coloured—and shrubs of box, some of which were trimmed into artistic shapes; and I remember before one door a representation of Warwick Castle, made of oyster-shells."

Ah! I, too, remember those pretty bee-hives, made of oyster-shells by the cunning hands of the rustics.

Those cottages of which Hawthorne speaks were, with their thatched roofs and whitewashed porches, always taken note of by people who passed up and down that road; but when they peered, as Hawthorne and I have done, over the well-trimmed hedge, and saw those white bee-hives, set in the midst of tiny gardens of the brightest flowers, their delight was immeasurably greater.

For nearly five-and-twenty years after Hawthorne's visit to Lillington, those homely huts and oyster-shell bee-hives were the admiration of every passer-by.

The cottages, which must have been centuries old, became, some time in "the seventies," too dangerous for human habitation, and so they were pulled to the ground. The oyster-shell bee-hives are gone, too; but they were so pretty, and looked so strong, that I hope they are still being used by the busy bees—perhaps in some back garden of a Lillington hut, where they are seen, admired, and defaced by the fat-cheeked children of the village.

I will leave Nathaniel Hawthorne, from whose books I have derived so much delight, in the quiet little graveyard at Lillington. There he sits among the tombstones, taking down in his note-book that strange inscription upon the headstone of John Treen, known as "the Lillington miser":—

I poorly lived  
And poorly died ;  
Poorly buried,  
And no one cried.

When his countrymen come to England, as they do in locust-like shoals, and ride so far into England's heart as "Leafy Warwickshire," I beg they will never forget that long road which leads from Leamington to "The Sign of the Bull" at Weston, where they can tread in the footsteps of Hawthorne.

# *At the Sign of the Bull:*

A RUSTIC RAMBLE.





## At the Sign of the Bull:

### A RUSTIC RAMBLE.

**W**HO will go to "The Sign of the Bull?"

If Nathaniel Hawthorne were in the flesh now, he would say "I." Indeed, when he was in England—in "Leafy Warwickshire"—in "the fifties," collecting materials for the series of sketches published under the title of "Our Old Home," he went more than once to "The Sign of the Bull." Silver flagons and tankards were in use then; and good nut-brown ale, such as Squire Cass was wont to quaff for breakfast, was brewed; and no doubt the author of "The Scarlet Letter" more than once hoisted the silver flagon, and thanked God for allowing him to taste the good, the true, the unadulterated English ale.

Ah! that word "ale" conjures up all kinds of visions. Some of them are delightful; and some of them are not delightful, in their picturesque, though squalid, viciousness.

Fifty years ago, the ale served up in flagons to customers at "The Sign of the Bull," by the hand of a meek-eyed, rosy-cheeked, curtseying damsel, who looked as though she lived on beefsteaks and fresh air, was of the full-flavoured, brown-coloured kind. It was prime, wholesome, and strong, and (if we are to judge by the pictures of that period) built up the Squire Thornhills and Dr. Primroses of those days in robust, perfect, and hilarious health.

Those were the happy days, the glorious days, as my old friend in knee-breeches and tall hat (eminently suggestive of the days when "William the Fourth was King"), whom I overtook on the road to "The Sign of the Bull," informed me; the days when he drove the mail-cart, and rode postillion "when a grand wedding wor on the carpet;" the days when old Nick Rawbone was host of "The Bull," and his bonnie Missis brought out the silver flagon to "he," when he was on the box of his mail-cart.

Then the shrivelled-up old charioteer became eloquent.

The breezy winds of April that came scudding northward, over the almost leafless Warwickshire hedgerows, had no power to chill the animation awakened in the mind of my wayside friend. He had one coat on, and no more; and, with his shrunken shanks, tall hat with a narrow brim, clean-shaven face, with a large nose and under-lip, and stick as crooked as his own body, he looked for all the world like one of Cruikshank's post-boys just stepped out of the page.

"Talk about beer!" he said with a sigh, as he thought of the joys that were departed from him, "I shanna drink no more like the brews o' old Nick. It wor as brown as yon ploughed field, an' as full o' life as a spinney wi' the hounds an' hunters in it. An' then the froth, lad! Eh! it foamed over the flagon like a colliflower. I 'ave seed Squire Brandon gallop up to 'The Bull,' dressed in his scarlet coat, wi' two rows o' gold buttons on't, an' shout out, 'Dolly! Dolly! a flagon o' your beer, Dolly; theer's none like it i' all Warwick-shoire.' An' the squire wor right; theer wunna. This brewed stuff as they sells at 'The Bull' now isna to be spoke on i' the same breath wi' the beer o' old Nick."

It was not my good fortune to have "entered into human nature" in the days when Nicholas Rawbone was mine host of "The Bull;" but from what I have heard from those who

were familiar with host and inn at that time, I think there cannot be a doubt that "The Sign of the Bull" had a great reputation for its malt-liquor.

With Old Mortality—in the person of the ex-mail-cart driver, ex-postillion, ex-beer drinker—at my side, progressing towards the desired goal at a snail's pace, the journey to "The Sign of the Bull" promised to be a lively one.

Shakespeare would have said, had he been on that road, that "the air bites shrewdly;" and so it did. At least, it appeared so to me, who had an overcoat on; but my venerable companion who had not, never once uttered a complaint against the cold. Withered and old as he was, he was proof to all the winds that April ever blew. He was too brave for such childish business. The glistening water-drop that ran from his eye to his nose, and stood dangling there, he whipped off with his bony finger with an air of the greatest contempt.

Wrinkled and attenuated as his figure was, under his blue waistcoat, with the large metal buttons, there beat a heart like the heart of a lad. His eyes were sunken far back into his head, yet he could see the day when he was "riding postillion," and was reckoned the smartest chap as ever got astride a nag. He was "a bit hard o' hearing," he told me; yet he could hear once again the old rollicking songs he used to sing, when driving the mail-cart past "The Bull," and on to the town of Rugby.

Yes, there is something infinitely touching and beautiful in the pleasures of memory. They make the cold winds of April appear warmer upon the cheek; they make the almost leafless hedges appear tinted with green; they make the long road to "The Sign of the Bull"—which is a very long road, extending from Stratford-on-Avon, past "The Dun Cow" at Dunchurch, into Rugby, the historical and classic—appear shorter and more delightful to the wayfarer.

Bless that old man, I say—that loquacious Old Mortality whom I overtook on the road — that overcoatless little old chap, who looked as much like a convalescent frog out for his morning walk as anything else. Bless his dear old heart for reviving the memories of “the forties”—the glorious, good old days, when George Eliot was taking down the measure of the Warwickshire peasant and the Warwickshire squire, the country parson and the lord of the manor!

May the little fellow live a few years longer to drink a few more glasses of “inferior” English beer, as he calls it, at “The Sign of the Bull;” and when he dies, may he be laid under the daisies in a little corner of the village graveyard, upon which the sun shines every day, and over which waves a little hawthorn tree, adorned with thousands of red berries; and may the birds come and sing over his grave—the thristle in the morning, and the nightingale at night!

It is, as before mentioned, a long lane that leads to “The Sign of the Bull;” but it is a lane that would repay a visit from anyone—more especially the emaciated literary man and the sorely-worried editor, who need a breath of Warwickshire air to blow the cobwebs from their brains and cheerfulness into their hearts. It is a thoroughly English, as well as a thoroughly Warwickshire lane, and there are scores of the same kind in this picturesque, historic, and leafy shire.

When Shakespeare tramped to Babylon, to make that “filthy lucre” which most men affect to abhor, but which all men, and most women, secretly covet, he probably went up this lane; because, if you follow it far enough, it takes you, as I have said, to Rugby, and that is the route which the son of the Stratford-on-Avon wool-stapler is most likely to have taken.

In April it is charming, though the wind does whip round you and raises the hair and the hat. It is glorious in June. There are few leaves on the trees or hedgerows in April, but

there is just a visible touch of green tinting the whole landscape, which foretells the advent of spring, with its young and lovely beauty. In June, if you wander to "The Sign of the Bull," you walk through an avenue of trees which, in some places, quite shuts out the blue canopy of the sky, and leaves you in the dim light of a maze—but a maze with the sun shining outside.

Passing Cubbington Wood, which, later in the day, echoes and re-echoes with the music of the huntsman's horn and the cries of the hounds, I and Old Mortality, who still keeps by my side—every now and then telling me a delightful little yarn of his past life—espy a human habitation set at the foot of a hill. Were it not that smoke is seen issuing from the chimney-top, one might regard it as a sport of Nature; for, when viewed at a distance, it looks like a colossal mass of green, as though a mastodon mole had contrived to throw up a mountain.

Coming nearer, it is found to be a neat Warwickshire cot—such as Anne Hathaway or sweet Phyllis might have lived, loved, and died in—the front of which is literally buried out of sight under the avalanche of ivy. It is a garment of green leaves from the chimney-pots to the flower-plots in the little front garden; and no doubt many a wandering painter has taken away upon his canvas a copy of that ivy-clad cottage in the heart of "Leafy Warwickshire."

My wayside friend volunteers the information that "that theer cot yon, at foot o' the hill, is wheer Sam Sprawson, the molecatcher, lives." Happy Mr. Molecatcher!

But where is "The Sign of the Bull"—that grand old inn where Old Mortality tells me there was such good ale drunk in the days of "Old Nick"?

I cannot stay to admire the quaintness of the village church, stuck upon an ancient mound of earth at the very opening of the village; neither can I wait to describe the rural beauties of

the adjacent duck-pond, with its gay flotilla of ducks. I must trot, or rather creep on, past an oldish prison-like building, set on a wide expanse of green land—which my snail-pacing friend tells me is the County Reformatory, “wheer wicked youngsters are sent to be made good ’uns of”—and slide down a deep ravine, where the long lane at last turns, and “The Sign of the Bull” comes in sight.

“The Bull Inn” has a sign overhead, on which was once depicted, by the hand of a village artist, the form of a red bull. Long years of exposure to frosts, and heats, and rains, and snows have quite obliterated the bull; and the house, looked at from the outside, might now with much reason be called “The Sign of the Black Board.” That sign creaks dismally, as most signs do, when the wind has a mind to be boisterous.

There are other signs, too, round and about the inn, and they do not creak. The latter are the signs peculiar to a meeting of Warwickshire sportsmen when held at a village inn—to wit, four old gentlemen in smock frocks, three or four plump-looking women (“wide women,” as Mr. Thomas Hardy would call them) without hats or bonnets, and five chubby, rosy-cheeked children, all natives of the village.

If you asked any of these good people—these signs and symbols of the “sport of kings”—what is going on there, the reply will sure to be that “the ’ounds be guin ter throw off here, sor.” I have often watched to see what the hounds “throw off,” and I have never been able to find out yet; but that may be owing to my ignorance, and not to the simplicity of the villagers.

As the morning was yet early, and as there was not a horse or a hound within the range of vision, I suggested to my fellow-pilgrim, in the tall hat and knee-breeches, that we should go into the parlour of “The Bull” and try the ale to be had there.

Shall I ever forget the look of the ex-groom, ex-postillion, ex-mail-cart driver, ex-superior-beer-drinker? Never while I live. The little withered face, with the large nose stuck in the middle of it, became illuminated with the joy of a creature who is thirsty and has no money to pay for a drink. He looked up at me, and, in his faded and far-sunken eyes, which had assumed an unwonted brightness at my suggestion, I could read as plainly as possible of the grand, and glorious, and good old days of his youth and manhood, when he sat and drank a good skinful of "Old Nick's" superior brew.

All the old memories—when Silas Lickorish was the constable of the village, and who, one glorious night, when the flagons, the tables, and the chairs were joining in the chorus of

A fine old English gentleman,  
One of the olden style,

had to be called into "The Bull" to "modderate the rattle"—flooded upon his jaded intellect once more, and transfigured him. He gave thanks with his face and eyes, as well as with his tongue.

"If you be so kind, sir," he said, "I should just like ter try Eliza's brew this time. In course she donna brew it her-sel', but Josh Leatherbarrow do, and he be a man as ought to know how."

And so we went into "The Sign of the Bull."

The name over the door—which was approached by one of those small gabled porches which were more common in the front of village taverns fifty years ago than now, and which was the only imposing piece of architecture in the whole fabric—was "Eliza Bunn;" so that, in the degenerate time of my visit, there was no longer a host of "The Bull," like the Nick Rawbone of immortal memory, but a hostess—a lady presumably



lacking a husband, and the knack of how to properly manage so old and famous a hostel as this.

She would, of course, be an old servant from "The Hall," or some other large house in the neighbourhood, and would know as much about the requirements of an inn, or the mysteries of beer, as the poultry-herd who looked after the cocks and hens at the Vicarage or Reformatory. She would, too, be one of those rigidly fastidious persons who, having acquired decorous habits in "the good families" in which she had been employed, would resent all attempts at mirth, and would endeavour, by her stern looks of severity, to impress upon the company the fact that beer-drinking was a very sad and sober function indeed, and not at all a thing to associate with cheerfulness, let alone revelry.

Besides this, Eliza Bunn would strictly enjoin her guests not to slop the beer upon the tables or spit upon the hearth-stone, as she really could not do "wi' folks as hacted i' that way." Yes, I must confess that the idea of a hostess instead of a host—an obese, good-humoured creature, with protruding eyes and beet-coloured cheeks—somewhat jarred upon my imagination, and left me rather biassed against "The Bull."

However, the ex-mail-cart driver led the way, and I followed him, with a terrible misgiving that I should rue the day that I drank of the "brewed stuff," about which my old friend had deigned to warn me.

Once inside "The Bull," my fears vanished.

Why on earth the house was called "The Bull" is a mystery to me, and only the old Tory longing to keep up titles and institutions could, for a moment, justify its retention. Never have I been in so comfortable or so clean an inn, which was more worthy to be called "The Home Tavern" than "The Bull;" for I am certain that few houses in the village of Westerley could, in any way, compare with the prettiness, the

cleanliness, and the comfort of this little wayside inn, with the black sign and the whitewashed front.

Indeed, the black sign, upon which was once depicted the figure of old Squire Brandon's red Durham bull, was the only reproach upon the house, inside or out; and the fact of it being suspended there so long in its begrimed state could only be accounted for by another fact—to wit, that Eliza Bunn prided herself on "not being all outside show," as they were at "The George and Dragon" at Honington, but on giving little show outside and plenty of comfort inside.

I must confess that the hostess of "The Bull" practiced very well up to her preaching.

As the ex-mail-cart driver led the way into the parlour where Eliza received her guests, the first thing that attracted my attention was the floor. It was laid with red tiles, and the brightness of the colour was sufficient to disclose the fact that they had been newly reddened that very morning. There was not a single speck on them; and, as Jack Sawyer, who lived in a little thatched cottage next to "The Bull" (at which he was a frequent visitor), used often to say, "you could eaten yourn vittle off on 'em, they wor so clane."

Near the window, which was filled with plants just assuming their spring leaves, and which was hung with neat, white tatted curtains, was a long dresser, that extended the whole length of the room. That dresser, too, was scrubbed as white as a table-cloth, and was quite in keeping with the grained bench, with high back, that stood before the great ingle, in the grate of which a cheerful fire was burning.

There were three guests sitting on this bench, along the front of which ran a narrow table—also grained and polished like the seat—and the eyes of the three were fixed upon a white terrier dog, which lay curled upon the hearth, as white as a newly-fallen heap of snow or some of Mrs. Bunn's newly-

washed linen ; lying as comfortable and easy as an old worsted slipper. His condition in life was eminently an enviable one even to the three guests who sat there at their ease, and who had mugs of beer on the table before them.

"You be a lazy young Jerry, you be," said a short, squat gentleman, dressed in dark clothes, and with an air of importance about him—a man whose name I afterwards learned was Job Power, and whose office in the parish was that of clerk to the parish church. "Yes, you be a lazy scoundrel, that you be," he continued, scratching the dog behind the ear. "Why donna yer go out ter the stables and catch some o' them rats?"

The word "rats" was enough to rouse Jerry to action. He was not so lazy a scoundrel as to be indifferent to the sport of rat-killing at any hour of the day ; so he sprang up and began to bark in that shrill, spasmodic way peculiar to canines when they are labouring under excitement. The barking attracted the attention of Eliza Bunn, who came swinging into the parlour from the next room to it, in which she was folding her linen for the press.

"Down, Jerry, down!" said the hostess of "The Bull," picking up her apron from her bouncing figure, and waving it in Jerry's face. "Don't you know better than to drive gentlemen from the door?"

The lady with the ample diameter and the good-looking face had caught sight of us, and was smiling at us.

"It were me as made Jerry bark, Mrs. Bunn," said the squat old gentleman again. "I seys 'rats' to he, an' he were off the floor in a jiffy."

"Eh, Master Power, but he munna mak' a row like that. Stop yer noise, Jerry, an' be off an' catch the rats if you want 'em," said the merry Eliza again, as she whipped her apron round Jerry's humid, sharp nose, and chased him out of the room. "Why, bless my stars!" she added, looking straight at

my friend, the ex-mail-cart driver, "sure its Master Carr, inna it?"

"Yes, missis, it be I," said Master Carr, as I now knew him. "Me an' this kind gen'l'man here be dropt in ter taste a sup o' your beer, Widow Bunn, if yer please."

"An' you shall ha' some o' the best in 'The Bull,' that you shall; cos its a mighty fine time sin' you were here. Sit yerselves down, please, and mak' yerselves at 'ome, while I runs and gets you summat to quench thirst wi'." And the good, fat creature, not by any means old, swept off into the room again, from which she had been attracted by the barking of Jerry.

While Mrs. Bunn went to draw the ale, I and my wayside friend took our place on the bench before the blazing fire.

"Master Carr," as my friend was called, seemed to be perfectly acquainted with the three inhabitants of the village who sat there waiting for the hounds to "throw off," and they seemed to be perfectly acquainted with him. They did not see him often, however, now, for he was growing rather stiffer than he used to be twenty years ago; and, as he lived at an out-lying house on the road to Honington, it was only upon special occasions that he could get as far as "The Sign of the Bull."

If there had been no Meet there that morning, I am sure there would have been some good mail-cart stories told when Master Carr had quaffed his first mug of ale, and was beginning the second—a fact at which I was not at all surprised, as Eliza's ale was really, in my opinion, of a first-rate kind, and just the sort to revive the memories of the good old days, the glorious days, when mail-carts ran, and stage-coaches had not stopped running.

"Do you mind that time, Master Carr," said Job Power, "somewheer about twenty year ago, when the mail-cart comed 'ome wi'out thee, an' left thee on th' road this side Honington?"

"Eh! lad, I minds it," said Master Carr, with his deep-sunken eyes twinkling merrily. "An' I minds, too, as the old 'oss didna stop at 'The Bull' and 'and in the mail-bags, as she ort to ha' done. A rare old 'oss though, for all that."

A crisp bark from the front of "The Bull," at this moment, informed myself and companions that it was now near noon, at which hour the hounds were to "throw off;" so we emptied our mugs of ale, touched our forelocks to buxom Eliza, and strolled out into "the field."

The narrow space in front of "The Sign of the Bull" was already inconveniently crowded—more with pleasure carts and carriages, that had brought well-to-do on-lookers from a distance, than with mounted people or sightseers on foot. The "field" itself was a slender one, and rather negligently dressed, as Master Carr, who was evidently of a rather critical turn of mind, pointed out. But some gentlemen are too lazy to dress for dinner; and many, by the same token, are too lazy to dress for the hunt. Commend me to the sportsman "in pink" or velvet, with silk hat and white breeches, looking for all the world like one of Leech's pictures, or Surtees' famous word portraits, come to life.

But, there, it is time to "throw off" now. Following the Master of Foxhounds and the pack come the riders, and after them the carts and carriages, until, in a few minutes, the space in front of "The Sign of the Bull" is deserted—except for a little old man in tall hat and knee-breeches, who is ever so many fathoms deep in bygone memories of the grand, and glorious, and good old days.

# **A Warwickshire Novelist:**

**GEORGE ELIOT.**



## A Warwickshire Novelist:

GEORGE ELIOT.

**A** WRITER of good books is more skilful than the painter, more talented than the orator, and more useful than the legislator; because, without the aid of colour, he can attract; without the splendid gift of articulation, he can enthrall; and without the reforming powers of the legislator, he can do good to multitudes.

Such a writer of genius was the gifted lady who adopted the pseudonym of "George Eliot."

Mary Ann Evans, commonly called Marian Evans, was born on the 22nd of November, 1819, at South Farm, one mile from Griff, in the parish of Chilvers Coten, Warwickshire. Her father, Robert Evans, was land steward to Sir Roger Newdigate, of Arbury Hall, near Griff—the "Cheverel Manor" of "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story." He was also surveyor to the estates of Lord Aylesford at Packington and Offchurch, of Lord Clifford at Weston-under-Weatherly, and of Mr. Bromley Davenport at Baginton—all well-known historical domains in Warwickshire.

The early life of the future George Eliot was passed amid those charming Warwickshire scenes which she has so vividly depicted in her works; and, owing to her erratic and varying nature, and her strange religious views, it does not seem to have been so happy as childhood and youth should have made it. But Mary Ann Evans was an original and virile thinker,



quite in advance of the people with whom she lived; and when once she had formed an opinion, she was steadfast in its support.

Before she adopted the function of a novelist, in which capacity she stands eminent in English literature, Miss Evans had written much and well. She had become affiliated to a select circle of London *literati*, among whom may be mentioned George Henry Lewes and Herbert Spencer, and contributed many philosophical and critical articles to *The Economist*, *The Leader*, and *The Westminster Review*—of which latter she was some time editor.

In the brilliant, but now defunct, *Leader* of September 1st, 1855, there is a slashing criticism of Benjamin Disraeli (afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield), supposed to be from the pen of Miss Evans.

At the suggestion of George Henry Lewes, Mary Ann Evans wrote "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton"—the first of her "Clerical Scenes"—under the name of George Eliot. These were published in 1857 in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and, by their wonderful fidelity to human nature, attracted wide notice.

The "Scenes of Clerical Life" were followed by her *chef d'œuvre*, "Adam Bede," which at once placed George Eliot upon the pinnacle of success. This, indeed, is a fine book, and whoever has not read it has yet to read one of the best works of fiction in the English language; albeit, the author's plan of marrying *Adam Bede* to *Dinah Morris*, while poor *Hetty Sorrel* is languishing in penal servitude, seems a dark spot upon the whiteness of *Adam Bede's* character.

"The Mill on the Floss," George Eliot's second book, was published in 1859, and enhanced its author's fame. In a measure, it is autobiographical, the character of *Maggie Tulliver* being descriptive of the early life of Mary Ann Evans. Throughout the book there is an amazing growth of human

nature, and the misfortunes of the *Tulliver* family read more like history than fiction, the events narrated being so pitilessly true to life.

Though a smaller work than the two preceding it, "Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe," is the most artistic. It was published in 1861, and is a story with a moral, showing the revolt and expulsion of narrow-mindedness by the better attributes of a man's nature. All the characters are beautifully drawn, that of the miserly weaver being a splendid psychological study.

"Romola," published in 1863 in *The Cornhill Magazine* was a new departure in the writings of George Eliot. It is probably less read than any of her books, and yet it is an elaborate picture of Italian life, masterly written. It is a Florentine story of the latter part of the fifteenth century, and opens with a proem, marvellous in the witchery and poetry of its language. *Tito*, the young Greek scholar, is a fascinating conception of character, and the glimpses of the life of Savonarola are episodes of history that rivet the attention.

George Eliot's other productions are—"Felix Holt," published in 1866; "Middlemarch," in 1871; "Daniel Deronda," in 1876; "The Legend of Jubal," published in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1871; and "Theophrastus Such," issued in 1879. In addition to these, George Eliot wrote a fine poem, entitled, "The Spanish Gipsy," in 1868, and "Agatha" in 1869—each work enhancing her reputation, although they have never been so widely read as her earlier efforts.

After the death of George Henry Lewes, which proved a severe blow to Miss Evans, she surprised her many friends, and the literary world (of which she was so bright an ornament), by marrying with Mr. Cross, who had long enjoyed the privilege of her friendship.

This gifted and highly-intellectual Warwickshire novelist paid

her debt to Nature at 4, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea—a short distance from the residence of Thomas Carlyle—on December 22nd, 1880, leaving a gap in the literary ranks which has not yet been filled, and is not likely to be while our authors write in the present fashionable and superficial style.

George Eliot was essentially a star in the literary firmament of the nineteenth century. As a novelist, she ranks with, if not above, Dickens and Thackeray; while, as a philosophical reasoner, she passes both, and runs Carlyle hard for the first place. The force, vigour, boldness, and naturalness of her writing has not been equalled by an English writer of the century; and for splendour of diction, breadth of conception, and truth of character, she can only be compared to Victor Hugo, though differing from that sovereign of fiction in being a realist instead of an idealist.

To the writer of these "Sketches of Leafy Warwickshire," who has lived where she lived, who has rambled in the "Shepperton" of her "Scenes of Clerical Life," and has talked with the descendants of the people from whom she drew her characters, the name of George Eliot will ever be a name to conjure with.



# The Warwick "Mop:"

A HIRING FAIR SKETCH.





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## The Warwick "Mop: "

### A HIRING FAIR SKETCH.

**C**OULD the shade of John de Plessetis, sometime Earl of Warwick, and husband of Margaret de Newburgh, were on the scene of its former abode, no doubt it would go back to the grave heart-sick at the sight of the Market Square during a nineteenth century fair, or, in the vulgar vernacular, "The Mop."

This John de Plessetis, in the year 1260, granted a Charter to the burgesses of Warwick for a "Three days' fair,"

"With immunity that all comers thereto should be quit of toll for six years; and if any man did commit any robbery within the compass of the said faire, to be amerced by the Earl's Bayliff, and twelve careful burgesses; and in case any stranger repairing thither should set up a stall of twelve feet upon the bare ground, to pay sixpence for the same, howbeit the inhabitants to erect their stalls at pleasure"

Being in the birth-time of fairs, which were originally Church festivals, it may reasonably be supposed that the Warwick Fair of six centuries ago was simply what it professed to be—a place for the transaction of commercial business. Not that it was for that purpose that John de Plessetis granted the Charter; therefore, presumably, as a nobleman of culture, having an acquaintance with contemporary literature, he would naturally



expect to find that, during a period of six centuries, the world had grown better, wiser, and more civilised.

But what would he find? He would look for "the twelve foot stall," and find the Barcelona nut-basket, six inches high; he would look for the sixpenny-rated stall of the stranger, and find the penny side-show containing the American fat woman; he would look for old-fashioned mirth, and find modern hilarity.

Nor could his surprise be wondered at. In his days, the fairs at Warwick seem to have been in the nature of bazaars. The fair he granted in 1260 was held for three consecutive days. In 1278, William de Beauchamp, another Earl of Warwick, held a fair occupying no less than sixteen days; and, in 1289, another fair was kept up for fifteen days. These events seem to suggest business as well as pleasure; for where is the pleasure-seeker who could survive "the fun of the fair" for sixteen consecutive days, unless it be the harmless dissipation synonymous with a staid and sober market day?

It would be interesting to be able to record the date when the old fair of Warwick, unconnected with peripatetic ballad-singer and wandering penny-showman, degenerated into a "Mop." Having regard to the following apparently correct definition of the word "Mop," by the cultured Brewer, it seems a name about the retention of which no town or village can find an excuse to be proud:—

"Some few days after the Statute fair, a second, called a 'Mop,' is held for the benefit of those not already hired. This fair mops, or wipes up, the refuse of the Statute fair, carrying away the dregs of the servants left."

This definition, no doubt, perfectly applied to the Warwickshire fairs when hiring was done there, though exception may be taken to the term "dregs of the servants" in an age when servant-maids stand upon their dignity; and it may still apply to the mopping and wiping up of dregs and refuse, though in a

different sense to that meant by Brewer. The word "Mop," however, is not particularly euphonious, and it might be well to try and substitute a more pleasant patronymic for it.

There have been two changes in the history of fairs since John de Plessetis established his "Three days' faire" at Warwick in 1260.

At first, the fair was a purely commercial undertaking—a mart in which domestic goods were bought and sold. Then servants began to be hired there, because the registry office had not yet sprung into existence. But even in those days there was the same appetite for something to distract and attract the attention, so largely manifest in these modern days. Accordingly, a performing show was tacked on to the fair, and business and pleasure could be engaged in at the same time.

If this change was not good for the future of the Warwickshire fair, it was not bad (commercially) for it when the showman was first introduced and became an institution. Crowds, larger than before, flocked to the fairs to see the extraordinary things done and exhibited there by mountebanks, almost equal in skill to the more ancient Egyptian magicians.

The fairs at Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon were, no doubt, visited by Shakespeare, who most accurately took down the measure of intellect possessed by the average fair-goer of his days. In "The Tempest," he makes *Trinculo* exclaim, when he sees *Caliban* :—

"A strange fish! Were I in England now (as I once was) and had but this fish painted, not a holiday-fool there but would give a silver piece; there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man; when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian."

This was what might aptly be called "The Show Epoch" in the history of the fair. It was noted for many curious and

skilful performances of juggling, which cannot be equalled to-day at the same festivals. Whether the celebrated Barbary horse of Banks ever performed at Warwick, or any other Warwickshire fair, cannot correctly be determined; but it most likely did, as Shakespeare alludes to it in the first act and second scene of "Love's Labour Lost."

In Malone's edition of Shakespeare, published in 1790, there is a print of the horse standing on its hind legs, with a stick in its mouth; his master with a stick in his hand and a pair of dice upon the ground. This celebrated beast, among other extraordinary exploits, walked up to the top of old St. Paul's, in London, which then had a slanting roof.

Now, if Banks's horse—which could tell the exact number of pence in a silver coin merely shown by its master, and would restore a glove to its owner after its master had whispered the name of the person who owned the glove in his ear—ever did appear at Warwick, it may be taken for granted that it drew almost the whole shire of people to the Market Place of the quaint old town of broken walls and buried glories. And the attraction would have been perfectly legitimate. But, as time has rolled on, and jugglery and mountebankry have become abstract arts, one is tempted to ask what it is that now draws so many crowds to the Warwick "Mop;" since so very little hiring is now done there, and it is shorn almost entirely of its old and picturesque associations?

# **The Dead Churches of Warwick:**

**AN ECCLESIASTICAL SKETCH.**

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## The Dead Churches of Warwick :

### AN ECCLESIASTICAL SKETCH.

**T**HIS sketch does not deal with the present Warwick Churches, but with those of the past. We are in quest of the dead sanctuaries which, in the glorious days of colour and chivalry, made the town of charters and charities one of the most notable and religious under the English sun.

We are looking out for those fine-storied porches under which the benefactors of Warwick were wont to pass in their days of mortal life, through which, into the "dim religious light" beyond, entered that celebrated native and historian of Warwick—the erudite and painstaking John Rous, and his no less eminent contemporaries.

To us, there is mystery as well as history in a search of this sort. We are not hyper-inquisitive, but we have a curious wish to know something of the dead churches of Warwick; and that is why one day, when we had some strange impulse spurring us forward, we went, all unversed in the matter as we were, to look for the Warwick churches—the dead ones.

First, we seek for perhaps the oldest church that Warwick ever had—All Saints'.

The Emscote sanctuary of that name, dedicated to all the Saints, was erected not many years ago, and built in the wrong place, if tradition is to be at all revered. And Warwick is noted all the world over for adherence to historical traditions.

In the dim ages, when the town of glories and generosity

was either a British or a Saxon town—for we perceive that the learned historians disagree upon that point—a church was erected to All Saints. Then, this wonderful Warwick was a Bishop's see. How revolving ages make and unmake the abodes of men—just as the great Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, made and unmade kings!

The Bishop was the pious Dubretius, who chose for his episcopal seat the Church of All Saints, which stood for the hoary winters of ages upon the spot where the famous Castle of Warwick—the princely home of the Grevilles—now rears its proud towers, which are centuries old. How long All Saints' Church had existed there before Bishop Dubretius chose it for his seat, history does not even insinuate; but that it was there seems highly probable, because that quondam Warwick townsman, John Rous, who afterwards resided at Guy's Cliffe, distinctly states that Gwydyr rebuilt Warwick after the expulsion of the Romans in 426, and also endowed it.

Where, then, was the Castle? That is a startling question, which, perhaps, may be met by the answer that, in all likelihood, if there was one at that time, it stood somewhere near its present position. A castle *was* built on the ruins of All Saints' Church, in the year 915, by Princess Ethelfleda, daughter of Alfred the Great; but every vestige of this, as well as the sanctuary, have vanished from mortal ken, making the quest a doubly perplexing matter.

But here was the first Warwick church; and as we toil up the hill from St. Nicholas' Meadow—where we have been meditating upon the dead past and its buried churches—a wondrous picture steals upon the vision of our mind.

We see the proud towers of the Castle melt away into nothingness—not as by an eruption of the burning earth, scattering grim ruin over the land; not as by a big fire, ravaging the fastnesses of centuries; but as by some power of magic,



WARWICK CASTLE FROM THE AVON

958



years ago there was a sanctuary dedicated to St. Helen, standing in the old-world neighbourhood of Bridge End, Warwick.

Going in quest of this dead sanctuary, we have time to think that we have stumbled upon the quaintest and queerest nook in creation, which might be called World's End as aptly and properly as Bridge End. It is a sort of antiquated corner, in which many people besides antiquarians delight to enter. In the beginning of the last century, the neighbourhood was considered much more important than it is now; the streets were very considerable ones, indeed, and, as has been said, there was a venerable church hard by, dedicated to the fair St. Helen.

It is a curious thing to have to record the fact that nothing, or next to nothing, is known of this old-world house of prayer. Of the dead Warwick churches, history is provokingly silent. There are no glowing pictures of these sacred edifices, drawn in the quaint words of the quaintest of historians (Warwickshire's own countryman), Sir William Dugdale. All that we know is—"There was a church."

It is too late now to depend upon oral information; for, long ere this, the oldest inhabitant has paid his or her debt to Nature, and returned to the same dust even as that of which St. Helen's Church has become. Out of the mists of ages, all that we can gather is that a fine church existed in Bridge End subsequent to the great fire of 1694. Even then it was falling into ruin and desolation, and very likely had no God's acre attached to it; for the dead churches were mostly without the convenience of graveyards.

At the commencement of the present century, St. Helen's Church had fallen upon evil days. It gradually dropped away, stone by stone, being long before that unused for religious services; and at last a portion of it was converted into a barn for cows and horses! That was in 1816. Every trace of that old barn—the last remaining relic of the once well-built and

famous Church of St. Helen—has now disappeared from the face of the earth. Even the stone memorials and fastnesses of centuries succumb to the lordly destroyer, Decay!

Could heart of man once think it? In the centre of the square and populous Market Place of Warwick—upon the very spot where the Statute fair is annually held with such tawdry pomp and gaudy circumstance—the ancient Church of St. John the Baptist once stood.

There was no Market Place then; no succulent ox roasted there on high days and holidays; no archæological Market Hall; no nothing of what appears there to-day. In the dim and distant past, of which many of us know little and think less, right away in the beginning of things, as far as Warwick is concerned, that stalwart and noble British prince, Caractacus, had set up his Court in the old town, and, according to the learned John Rous, founded a church on the site of the present Market Place to St. John the Baptist.

That is a curious circumstance. Caractacus was contemporary with the Mercian king, Offa, who built and endowed the original church at Offchurch—a tiny village five miles eastward; and when we consider that both of these warriors lived and reigned in the year *circa* A.D. 690, some estimate of the age of the church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, at Warwick, may be gathered.

When we saunter into the spacious Market Square now-a-days, where there is much modern and less antique, the mind can scarcely grasp the astounding fact that one thousand years ago a beautiful and massive sanctuary stood there, erected by the warlike and Christian prince, Caractacus. Truly, Warwick deserves the appellation of “historic” and the veneration of mankind. It has lived through the centuries; it has seen ages born and die; yet it lives on, ready to stand for another thousand years—if the world lasts so long.

But this Church of St. John the Baptist. There is no more mistake about that than there is about the first All Saints' and St. Helen's. In fact, the cobwebs of centuries do not hang upon it so much as upon the two latter dead churches. There are mists surrounding them which do not obscure the edifice of the Market Place.

When that old Warwickshire man, Sir William Dugdale, was in the flesh, from 1605 to 1686, the walls of St. John the Baptist's Church were still standing, though the body and tower of the fabric had fallen to ruin. He saw them with his own eyes, and has made notes about them in his ponderous tome, "The Antiquities of Warwickshire."

What became of those walls, which, doubtless, had been written upon by no less an immortal than William Shakespeare? Where did all the stones go, each one of which was hallowed by a thousand historical memories? These questions, interesting and absorbing though they be, are likely to remain answerless, unless the very stones of Warwick upon which modern people walk should speak with "most miraculous organ."

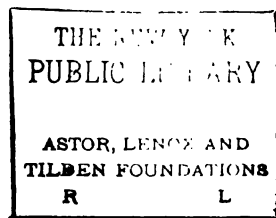
St. John the Baptist's Church is one of the dead churches—dead only in name; for the dust into which it has fallen has, doubtless, been used again, and is to-day unsepulchred, doing duty in some form about the ancient town of Warwick.

Returning from the Market Place and our search for the olden shrine of St. John the Baptist, we pass through the quaint old square, with its marvellous, fine, familiar view of St. Mary's Church, and under the shadow of the heaven-directed spire; thence we make our way along the handsome Northgate Street, at the extremity of which we come full upon the well-wooded and historical Priory.

Upon this enchanting spot in the old-world Warwick stood the Church or Priory of St. Sepulchre, whence to this day it derives its name.



WARWICK CASTLE FROM THE AVON



The mention of the appellation carries us back a long way down the ages. We live in the reign of Henry the First, when this now hoary and memory-haunted Warwick was the arena of many gorgeous and chivalrous events; when the age was painted in many thousand hues, whose reflections were happily cast upon the fair face of the picturesque town. Then the Canons of the Regulation Society shambled up and down Northgate Street, and sought the hallowed and quiet solitudes of the Priory.

Warwick is charmingly quaint and picturesque *now*, but in the epoch of time to which we allude it must have been doubly so. Not only did the mysterious monks inhabit the Priory—which was an emulation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre established at Jerusalem—but thousands of Christian pilgrims used to resort thither. As Carlyle very aptly remarked, it was

A temple and seminary and prophetic mount,  
Whereto all kindreds of the earth will pilgrim.

It was founded by Henry de Newburgh, Earl of Warwick, who, however, “shuffled off this mortal coil” ere it was completed, leaving that pious function for his son, Roger. The Church of St. Sepulchre, at the Dissolution of Monasteries, became the property of the Crown, until, in 1547, the Priory and lands were granted to one Thomas Hawkins, a native of Warwick.

The smiles of fortune had descended upon this quondam townsman—whose dust, like the great Alexander’s, may now be stopping the bunghole of a local beer barrel—for he was only the son of a fishmonger who sold fish in the Market Place hard by. All honour, we say, to the Warwick man who made enough money out of the sale of fish to enable him to acquire so fine an estate as the Priory of St. Sepulchre.

He assumed the name of Fisher with his accession to wealth and position; and, moreover, he entertained Queen Elizabeth in his house on her visit to Warwick in 1572; so that the Priory is surrounded with interesting and historical memories, which should never be forgotten. He demolished the ancient edifice and erected upon its site the present fabric, which he christened after his own original name, calling it "Hawkins's Nest," from its position in the midst of a lofty grove.

As a religious house, therefore, the Church of St. Sepulchre was disendowed and dismantled at the Reformation; and not one solitary monk is now seen stalking from its enchanted woodland, to remind us of the days that are as dead as the old churches of Warwick. The Priory, however, is still there, as remodeled by Thomas Hawkins, or Fisher; and in a town of so much curious lore and historical greatness, there are few objects of more interest to the native, the antiquarian, and relic-hunter than the site of the ancient Church of St. Sepulchre.

We have a great veneration for the Saltisford, because it is old, and gives us a picture of semi-ancient Warwick, which, if it seems strange to our somewhat fastidious eyes, claims our regard for presenting us with a tangible form of the architecture of the past.

Down this broad highway we advance in quest of the ancient church dedicated to St. Michael, the Hibernian's patron saint. On either hand the unevenly built houses, with the projecting steps and modest doorways, engage our attention. The Saltisford is interesting to us because of the religious edifice which in the last century existed there, and which, it is said, was used for sacred worship early in the present century.

St. Michael's Church, of which we imagine few Saltisfordians of to-day ever dream, and about the existence of which even many Warwick natives are blissfully ignorant, was evidently a fabric of much antiquity, as connected with it, and dedicated

to the same patron saint, was a hospital for lepers, which fact alone will suffice as an estimate of the hoariness of St. Michael's. By whom it was built, by whom it was endowed, and by whom it was pulled down in the early years of the present century, we cannot pretend to say; but to old Saltisfordians its site *was* well known.

Down the steep incline for which the Saltisford is noted, and a few yards beyond the Gas Works (which admirable buildings were erected in 1821), there is the site of the ancient Church of St. Michael. To this religious landmark, which the hand of Time has blotted out from the face of the earth and almost from the memory of man, the old dwellers on the Saltisford Rock used to repair. Some relics of its quondam fastness were still to be seen some fifty years ago; now these have almost vanished from human ken, and the Church of St. Michael, as a religious edifice, is one more of the dead and buried churches of Warwick, though a portion of the building may still be traced in the blacksmith's shop at the lower end of the street.

In our perambulation of this ancient and historic borough, our feet are drawn westward, into the very heart of Richard the Second's world.

Here is the most historical and memorable place. As we pass down the stone-flanked declivity that leads to the West Gate, we gaze upon the quaint, gabled habitations of Shakespeare's days, and expect to see a troop of gallants, in hose, doublet, and plumed head-dress, issuing from the picturesque gateway of Leycester's Hospital, together with the knights of Holy Trinity and St. George, making a scene of Elizabethan charm that fills us with wonder, not unmixed with envy.

O! what a panorama of colour was hoary old Warwick then! What a gorgeous theatre of plays and players; a world of quaintness, beauty, and never-dying romance!



We pass under the crusted gateway of centuries, with the memories of the glorious past before our eyes, in quest of the house of prayer, in which these former townsmen were wont to supplicate for "repentance, pardon, peace." This was the ancient Church of St. Lawrence, which stood at the extremity of West Street, on the south side, as near as historical landmarks permit us to discover.

Beautifully seated amid the rural scenery that leads to the village of Barford, this sacred edifice, within view of the frowning West Gate Tower, must have been as welcome and pretty a church as Warwick could boast in its days of religious pomp and golden circumstance. Near the site of the Church of St. Lawrence, in West Street, originated the great holocaust of 1694, which laid the greater portion of the town in ashes.

Unlike the other dead churches about which we have written, and which have left some slight landmarks by which future ages could trace their exact position, there are, so far as we know, no vestiges left of St. Lawrence's Church. But its memory remains; and when Warwick people of to-day walk down the wide and irregular West Street, let them remember that in its old-world history there stood the quaint Church of St. Lawrence.

There are other dead and buried fabrics of which we have made no record. Those we have touched upon will convey to our readers the gleam of a vanished age, and will show Warwick to be worthy of religious as well as historical memory. A trinity of subjects crowds upon this venerable town of wars, warriors, and worthies, and bequeaths to it the renown it so richly merits. The names of the trinity are—History, Sanctity, and Learning. Warwick, indeed, has been the town of churches; and to that fact, we think, is to be ascribed its former glory, generosity, and greatness.

# **The Old Leamington Steeplechases :**

**A SPORTING SKETCH.**



## The Old Leamington Steeplechases:

A SPORTING SKETCH.

THE Old Leamington Steeplechases! Yes; in "the thirties," the village-like town of Leamington was enjoying its so-called "palmy days," and sports were the most popular of pastimes.

Racing was then—as it is now—a fashionable amusement. Marquises, lords, and baronets of the true sporting spirit were resident in the town, with their stables of blood horses. Races were run everywhere—great races and big wagers. In the early "thirties," a steeplechase was actually decided upon a course formed at the north end of the present Royal Parade.

The first course of the Leamington Steeplechases proper was laid out at Ashorne, a village on the west side of Warwick, and the races were run on November 14th, 1834. There the Marquis of Waterford's celebrated horse, *Jerry*, beat the no less popular *Vivian* of Captain Lamb. Emboldened by his success, the Mytton-like nobleman was eager for enterprises of greater pith and moment. He at once sent out his famous challenge to match his favourite horse, *Cock Robin*, against the *Vivian* of Captain Lamb, for the princely sum of one thousand pounds a side. The wager was accepted with alacrity. Then came the tossing as to whether the match should take place in Warwickshire or Leicestershire. The Marquis of Waterford won the toss, and chose four miles of Leicestershire country—from Norton Steeple to Carlton Clump.

On the 21st of December this celebrated performance took place, the Marquis riding his own horse, and Mr. Beecher being astride *Vivian*. It was a valiant and glorious race, so the chroniclers assert; but defeat followed the Waterford colours, much to the discomfiture of the Marquis. *Vivian* won in dashing form, and the church bells of Leamington actually rung out a merry peal (surely the vicar must have been "a sporting parson") for the victory of the Warwickshire horse!

The second course of the Old Leamington Steeplechases was formed on land about a mile and a half from Southam—a village in the Rugby district. There a brilliant race took place on March 31st, 1836. A trio of well-known horses—*Flacrow*, *Vivian*, and *Yellow Dwarf*—were matched, and passed the winning-post in the order printed. The Marquis of Waterford himself was mounted upon *Yellow Dwarf*, and galloped in a good third.

The Campion Hills Course, at Leamington, was staked out and made in 1836. It commenced in a piece of turf immediately below the Campion Hills—or Newbold Hills, as they were then called. It extended as far as the Runghills and Knave's Hill, on the north side of the present Red House Farm, where the last flag, a red one, was placed. The course covered an area of four miles, and contained thirty fences, of a less negotiable character than those now in vogue.

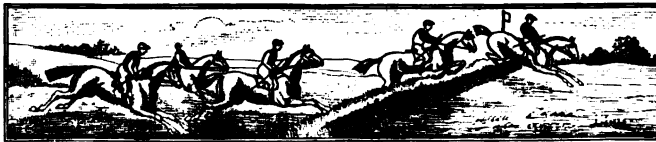
A goodly company of sportsmen assembled on the Campion Hills Course on March 20th, 1840. There was the dashing Marquis of Waterford, who, in his devil-may-care way, made a bet of £500—and won it, too—that he would be the first over the first seven fences. On the field were Lord Eastnor, the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Belfast, Count Blucher, Sir Edward Mostyn, Henry Christopher Wise (a descendant of the Henry Wise mentioned by Addison in *The Spectator*), Captain Lamb, and many another jovial son of Nimrod.

Seven horses started to the flag. The Marquis of Waterford, on the stately *Columbine*, dashed to the front and over the first fence. Fast in his wake came Mr. Carter on the *Doctor*; and close behind him the enterprising *Jerry*—the hero of the Ashorne race above mentioned—carrying Mr. Brotherton.

Then followed Mr. Mason on *Lottery*, and Mr. Powell on *Seventy Four*. With Mr. Carlin mounted, *Ringleader* was out of his latitude in the fifth place. Mr. Macdonough came up sixth on *Winchester*; and on *Hasty*—who in this case was misnamed—Mr. Rigg brought up the rear.

Away, away they went; and at the finish, just below Newbold Hill, the dashing *Seventy Four* shot out two or three lengths to the front. Then came the tug of war. Now it was that *Lottery* disputed the victory, and, with a prodigious rush, collared *Seventy Four* in a few strides; and the judge's verdict went "by a head," albeit there were some who protested that it was a "dead heat."

That was the glorious and final race of the decade ending March, 1840. After a lapse of forty-four years, the Leamington Steeplechases were revived, and run over the Campion Hills Course on March 25th, 1884. They have been continued every year since with increasing popularity.





# **Kenilworth Castle:**

**A SKETCH OF NOBLE RUINS.**

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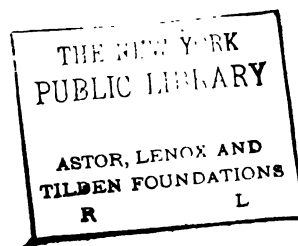






Kenilworth Castle from the Bridge.  
Rufford, 1885 n.

**KENILWORTH CASTLE**



## Kenilworth Castle:

### A SKETCH OF NOBLE RUINS.

**T**HERE is no more charming ride, or ramble, in "Leafy Warwickshire" than from Leamington to Kenilworth, by the Kenilworth Road. It is about five miles of shady lane, on each side of which a varied landscape, with here and there a house of historic memories, greets the eye.

There is another way—from Warwick through the sequestered village of Leek Wootton—which, as it passes the romantic mansion of Guy's Cliffe, is usually a popular retreat with the pleasure-seeker. The village of Leek Wootton, with its fine church, quaint ale-house, and rustic cottages, has also certain decided charms for lovers of English rural scenery.

Kenilworth is a village-like town, still wearing the garments, so to speak, of a picturesque antiquity. It is the very place for a castle. The long, straggling street—the entrance to the town—is still highly reminiscent of bygone days; and there is about it the suggestion that it is the pathway to an object of greater fame, of greater antiquity, and of greater historical value.

Passing up the leading street to the Abbey Hill, a delightful sight meets the gaze. Spread out before the spectator are the spacious Abbey Fields, whose winding and interesting paths lead northward to the ruins of Geoffrey de Clinton's famous Abbey. In 1890 this relic of ages ago was unearthed,

and disclosed to view much of the splendid structure erected by the founder. Looking beyond, in a westerly direction, the lofty broken towers of the ruined Castle are to be seen, hoisting the crowns of their hoary heads high above the tree tops.

The magnificent ruin stands upon an elevation overlooking the town. It is approached by a shady and declining lane, across which a tiny brook murmurs in its pebbly bed. As the visitor rambles down this sequestered lane, the outer walls of the Castle, towering up in formidable height, inspire him with reverential awe. Though crumbling to dust year by year, there is a certain splendour in their decay; a stirring war with Time and the elements too eloquent for words.

Entering under the arch of the Gate-house, and through a small modern wicket gate at the end of a neatly-kept garden, the spectator is at once brought full upon the ruined glories of the stately pile. It is a grand sight to look up at the frowning towers, aspiring to the clouds; towers which seem toppling for a fall, and yet which will brave the roughest blast of winter for a long time to come.

To touch upon the building's ancient history, it may suffice to say that the Castle was built by Geoffrey de Clinton in the reign of Henry the Second; that monarch having given the Manor of Kenilworth to De Clinton in token of his services to the State. The tower known as "Cæsar's Tower" is, from its Norman character, beyond all doubt the Keep of De Clinton's famous Castle.

From the date of its erection to the eighth year of the reign of Henry the Third, the Castle remained in the Clinton family. It then came into the possession of Simon de Montford, and, whilst he was the owner, it resolutely withstood a siege against the king's armies on August 24th, 1266; the De Montfords being among the barons who had revolted from the king.

During successive dynasties Kenilworth Castle remained a royal one, and the abode of sovereigns. In the fifth year of her reign, however, Queen Elizabeth granted it to her favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who entertained his royal mistress there with such lavish display that the hospitalities were called "The Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth."

Readers of Sir Walter Scott's historical novel, "Kenilworth," will remember that upon the approach of Queen Elizabeth to the Castle, the gigantic porter at the Gate-house resigned his club and key, with the complimentary words:—

Dazzled and blind, mine office I forsake ;  
My club, my key, my knee, my homage take.  
Bright paragon, pass on in joy and bliss—  
Beshrew the gate that opes not wide at such a sight as this.

At the death of Robert Dudley, in 1588, the Castle came to his brother Ambrose, "the good Earl" of Warwick. From the latter it descended to Robert's son, Sir Robert Dudley ; and from him—who, having fled from England, was accounted an outlaw—it passed to the Crown. It was in Cromwell's days that this historical pile became, as it has been finely called, "a magnificent ruin." The Lord Protector gave the Castle to his officers. They demolished it, felled its timber, and drained its moat.

At the Restoration, the edifice and estate were granted by Charles the Second to Laurence Hyde, afterwards Earl of Rochester. The Castle then passed by marriage, first, to the Earl of Essex ; and afterwards to Thomas Villiers, Earl of Clarendon. In the family of the latter the noble fabric remains ; the present Lord Clarendon taking care to preserve it, as much as possible, from further decay.

Though but the shell of its former glory, Kenilworth Castle is deservedly one of the chief attractions of "Leafy Warwick-

shire." There is history in every stone that is left of it. The pleasure-seeker of to-day, treading the beautiful greensward in front of the hoary pile, walks in the footsteps of Queen Elizabeth, Robert Dudley, and the fair Amy Robsart, who has given the requisite touch of romance to the Castle's history.

It is a delightful spot in which to meditate—as Sir Walter Scott says in speaking of it — “on the transitory value of human possessions, and the happiness of those who enjoy a humble lot in virtuous contentment.”



# **Compton-in-the-Hole :**

A WARWICKSHIRE "SLEEPY HOLLOW."





## Compton-in-the-Bole :

A WARWICKSHIRE "SLEEPY HOLLOW."

**I**N a coombe, or basin, of the land near to Edge Hill, lies one of Warwickshire's most remarkable mansions. It is unique in its situation ; delightful in the historic glamour with which it is surrounded ; and, to the rambler with antiquarian leanings, affords a wide and valuable field of observation.

Compton Wynnates, the Warwickshire seat of the Marquis of Northampton, as far as absolute interest is concerned, and regarded as a place of sudden and astonishing surprises, is probably without a rival in England.

To find its equal, the lover of the strange, and what one might almost call the preternatural, must go to those old chateaus in Germany which are so closely connected with romance and legend. Compton Wynnates, indeed, has both legend *and* romance in its history. Its hiding-places recall the days of hunted priests and secret masses, fugitive kings and imprisoned soldiers.

The mansion, which has so great a fascination for the sightseer, has for centuries been the Warwickshire seat of the Comptons. It was built by that famous William Compton who was high in favour with Henry the Eighth ; who was knighted by him, was made Gentleman of the Bedchamber, and was afterwards created Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

Much of the material used in the construction of the moated mansion at Compton Wynnates was brought from the neighbouring Fulbrooke Castle—in the park of which Shakespeare stole the deer of Sir Thomas Lucy.

The local name of Compton Wynnates is "Compton-in-the-Hole." No name could better describe its position. The house and few cottages that constitute the hamlet are in a veritable hole. Coming from Brailes and Tysoe, the two nearest villages, the rambler can obtain no view of this picturesque residence of the Marquis of Northampton until he is right upon it.

It is built in a perfect "Sleepy Hollow."

Its form is quadrangular, and full of the picturesque accessories peculiar to the last style of fortified dwellings. It is built of red brick and timber, and on these the hand of Time has laid a garnish which heightens their effect.

The absolute hoariness of the house is awe-inspiring. Viewing the building from outside, it might well be imagined by the beholder that it gave lodging to-day to a Tudor family.

And the inside of the house is as eloquent of Tudor days as the outside. There is a King Hal's chamber, where the visitor can walk in the footsteps of "the Merrie Monarch;" it is also certain that Good Queen Bess haunted the rooms of this mansion when visiting Elizabeth Spencer, the Canonbury heiress, who had eloped from Islington with Lord William Compton, and married him.

Inside and out, the house is redolent of romantic and warlike memories. It has a close connection with the battle of Edge Hill. A room is shown in which King Charles slept on the night preceding the fateful battle. Troops were also garrisoned in a portion of the building; and these facts in its history give it a martial air.

There is no more curious mansion in "Leafy Warwickshire" than Compton Wynnates. It is more than a link with



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the past; it is almost a chain. It speaks of revelry, romance, priestcraft, and bloodshed; and its out-of-the-world situation is not its least charm. No rambler in this classic land with an eye for the quaint, the ancient, and historic, should omit to bend his steps towards Compton-in-the-Hole—a veritable Warwickshire “Sleepy Hollow.”





## Notes to "The Tantivy Trot."

(See page 42.)

THERE are very few survivors in Warwickshire of the passengers by this famous coach. The Rev. Henry J. Torre, of Norton Curlew, near Warwick; Mr. Darwin Galton, of Claverdon Leys; and Mr. J. Gibbs, of Cutlers Farm, Wootton Wawen, all, happily, still living, knew the coach well, and frequently travelled by it.

The drivers of the coach, in their day, were a man called "Black Will" and Salisbury. The former, whose name is mentioned in the coaching books of the time, used to drive "The Tantivy," on alternate days, from Birmingham to Oxford. Salisbury was one of the quickest guards in England at putting on and taking off the skid, or slipper, of the coach without going on the road to do it. He was very popular at Oxford, and used to wine in the colleges.

A night coach running from Birmingham once had both leaders down at 10 o'clock, near Edstone Lodge (the birthplace of Somerville, the poet of "The Chase"), through having tumbled over a bullock which was lying in the roadway. One horse was so damaged that it had to be left. The pole was also broken. Another was procured, and, after much grumbling from the outside passengers, was fitted to the coach, and three horses were got ready. When about to start an old lady, who had evidently been fast asleep, put her head out of the window and exclaimed, "Anything the matter, coachman?" This caused some laughing, and put all in good humour for the rest of the journey.

I am indebted to the Rev. H. J. Torre and Mr. Darwin Galton for the above information. Mr. Torre is the author of a well-known book called "My Own Recollections," which describes his career at Harrow between 1841 and 1854. There are some good coaching stories in the book.



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